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JANUARY 2011
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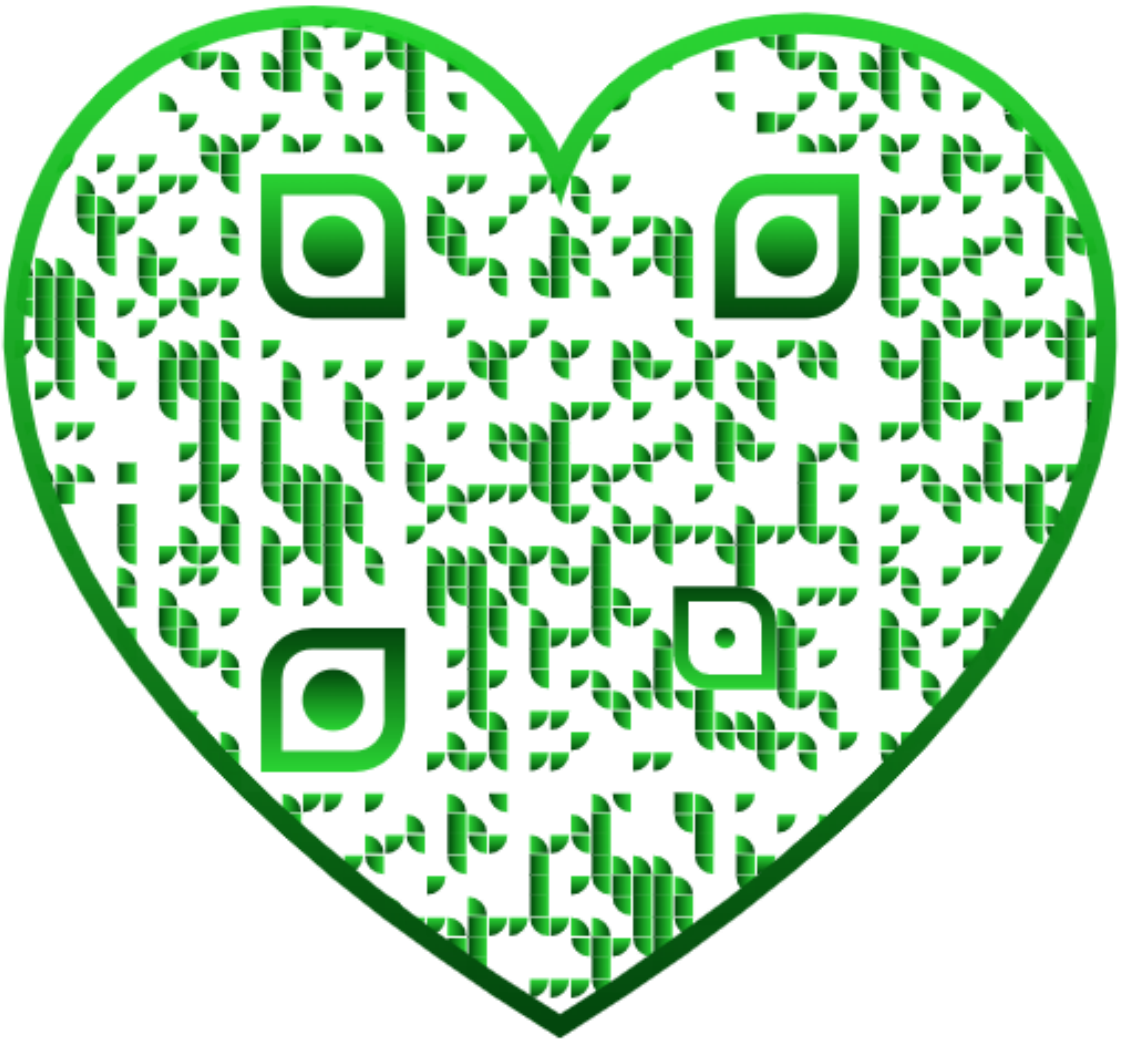

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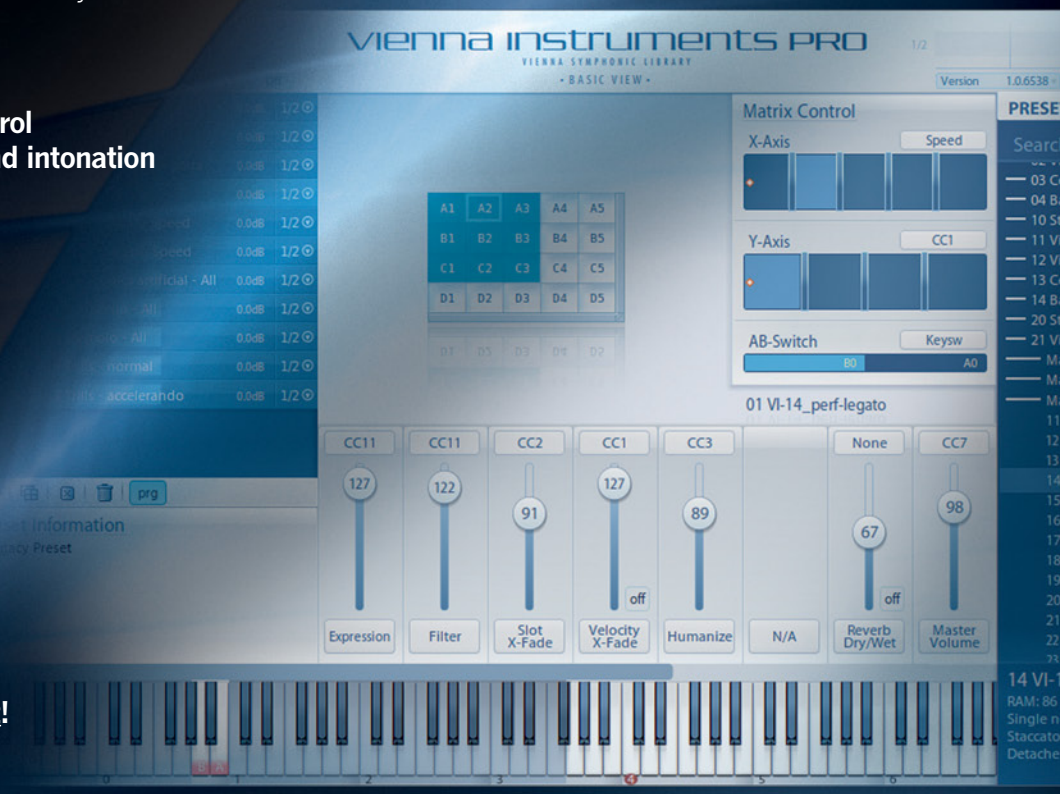

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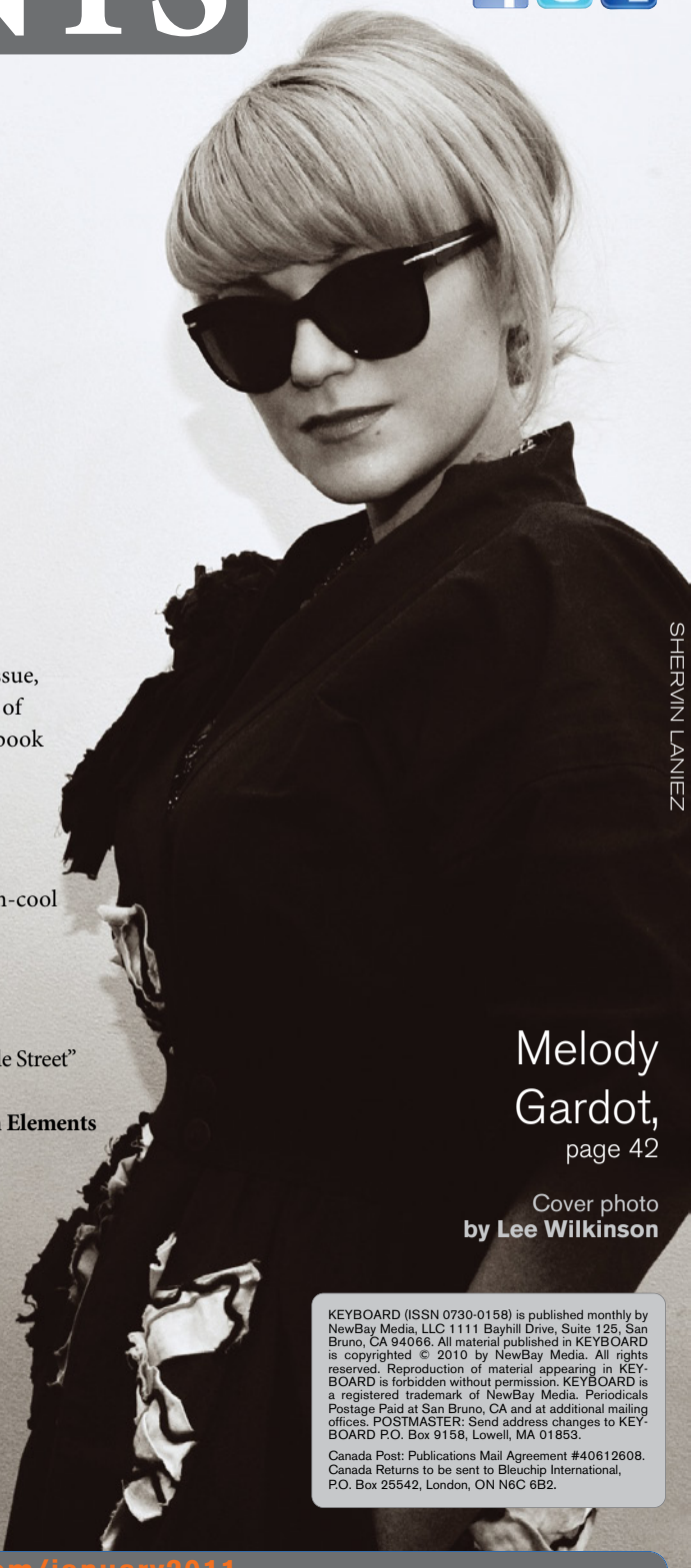

SHERVIN LANIEZ

Melody Gardot, page 42

Cover photo **by Lee Wilkinson**

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Video report: New Gear at AES.

Cavalcade of stars interviewed at MoogFest.

Jon Carin of Roger Waters' *The Wall* tour interviewed.

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From the Editor

You've probably seen those "Power of Print" ads in food, travel, and news mags, reassuring us that magazines are alive and well in this age of being able to read Pynchon novels on our phones. I get asked fairly often whether *Keyboard* may go digital-only, so I wanted to share two recurring experiences that give me confidence we won't be giving up the analog warmth of print anytime soon.

First, my job includes getting time out of, well, rock stars. The chief gatekeeper on this quest is the publicist, a creature that's usually 20-something, ultra-hipster, and eyeballs-deep in social media—the very demographic pessimists say is driving the decline of print. If that's true, though, then why does nearly every publicist (who doesn't already know *Keyboard*) inevitably ask me, "So, are you in print, or *just* online?" The emphasis is almost always theirs, and when I answer "print, monthly," the gate almost always opens.

Second, a lot of readers have told me that the first thing they do when *Keyboard* arrives is flip through the ads to see what's new. Moreover, readers who hunt back issues say they love the vintage ads. Ads people actively seek out? Not crazy talk—print. By contrast, an ad that interrupts what you're doing on the computer just makes you mad at whoever put it there.

That's why I'm bullish on our serving you and your music in print *and* online, and very much looking forward to new ways in which we'll do this in the year ahead.

Stephen Fortner

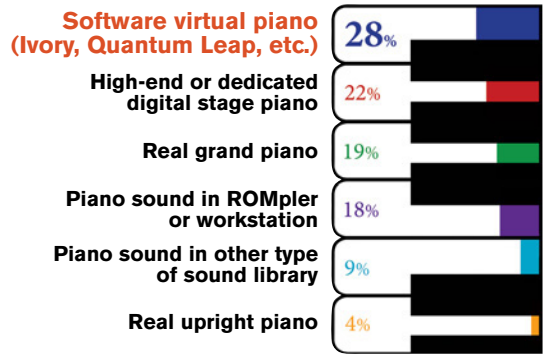
DIG MY RIG!

Killer organs, spanky electric pianos, soaring leads, lush pads—that's what I hear in my dreams. This is my dream rig and it sounds as good as it looks. Modular by design, it can be as simple or as elaborate as the gig demands. A quick rehearsal? Throw the Nord Stage Compact in the bag and go. Most gigs just call for just the four-space rack and the Stage, which means just one trip from the car. The rack holds power, Ashly mixer, Yamaha Motif Rack XS, and Roland MSE-1, and mounted in back are my beloved Neo Ventilator rotary pedal and Radial direct boxes. Custom RedCo snakes include cable groups for the Nord Stage and Wave and Minimoog Voyager. The Stage's group carries left, right, and organ audio channels, MIDI, power, and Ventilator speed control. Adding the Wave takes only a few minutes, and it's a remarkable synth. Its custom paint job is a real treat. The Voyager is the most recent member of the family, and is joined by an Echolution delay. All three keyboards are about hands-on control. Shamefully, I use the Motif Rack XS very little due to "lack of spontaneity." But when gigs call for something beyond organs, EPs, and synths, the Motif offers an enormous cache of amazing sounds. And the old Roland String Ensemble? It's thick and juicy and perfect for layering into pads.

Dan Patten, a.k.a. RedKey on the Keyboard Corner forum.

The Poll

How do you get grand piano sound in the studio?



Be counted!
New polls go live the first and third Tuesdays of each month at keyboardmag.com.

TUOMAS VITIKAINEN

SOAPBOX: OPETH OMISSION?

Thank you so much for November's article on keyboards in hard rock. As a keyboardist in a hard rock band, I feel like the odd man out at just about every gig. I was surprised, however, that Per Wilberg of Opeth wasn't mentioned, especially considering Opeth is one of the biggest bands not only in metal, but in prog. Though they haven't had keyboards their entire career, since working with Steven Wilson [of Porcupine Tree], Opeth has been instrumental in bringing classic keyboards to the death metal scene. Per was also featured in *Mellodrama*, the recent Mellotron documentary.

Mark Focarile, Meriden, CT, via email

Mark, we'd wanted to include both Opeth and Finnish rockers Nightwish in the November issue, but we were unable to get in touch with them in time for our deadline. They're both high on our list for future coverage. Readers, check out Mark's band at milemarkerzero.com. Stephen Fortner

NATHAN JONES

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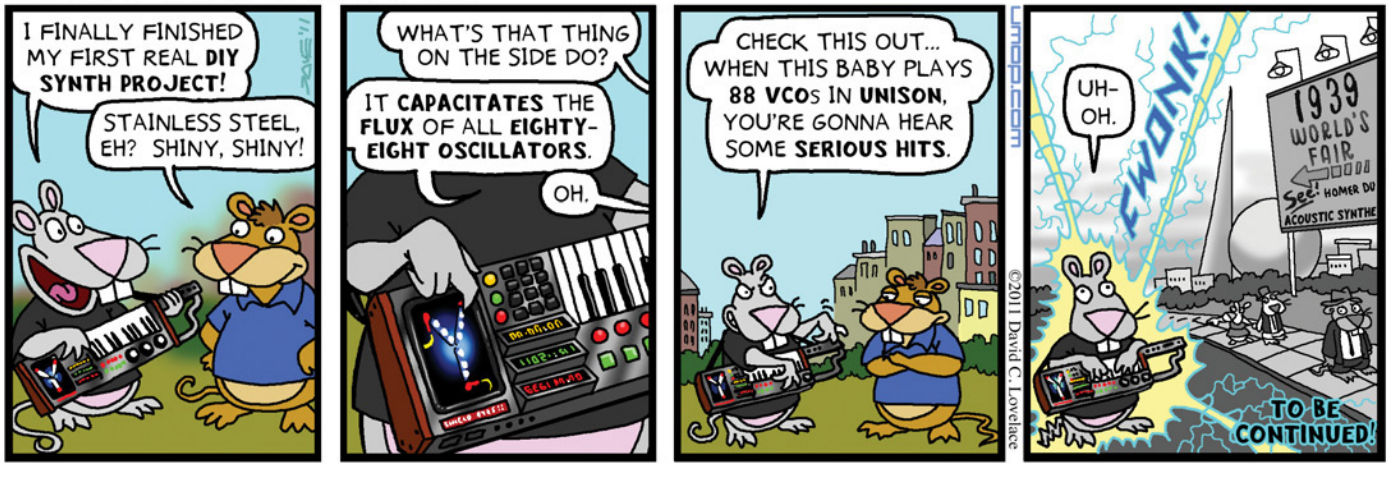


BOB MUSSELL

KOREL TUNADOR

Gigging With the Goo Goo Dolls

Multi-instrumentalist, singer, and songwriter Korel Tunador is burning the keyboard candle at both ends these days, with a steady stream of high-profile sideman *and* leader gigs in constant tow. Katy Perry and the Goo Goo Dolls are just two of the headlining acts that have recently tapped the Pittsburgh native's wellspring of keyboard creativity. "I'll be on the road with the Goo Goo Dolls for the next year and a half," he tells me via phone from Annapolis, Maryland. "I'm having a blast."

Tunador got his musical start in Pittsburgh, leaving at the age of 17 to attend the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston for saxophone studies. "Pittsburgh is an amazingly creative place," Tunador tells me, "but I knew I had to get to a big city with a lot of musicians in it. At that point I was playing piano, bass guitar, and saxophone, and it was the saxophone that really resonated with me at the time. It ended up being a great thing, because it gave me the opportunity to play with hundreds of guitar and keyboard players before I started playing those instruments professionally myself. I played tons of jazz and rock gigs. It turned out to be a great vehicle for learning, as well as an asset in the long run."

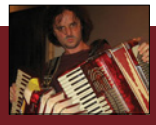
Tunador would eventually relocate to Los Angeles where his career would take off. "When I moved to L.A. eight years ago," he says, "I did it with the intention of starting or joining a band—of doing *something*. My first year there was a total disaster! I swear, I couldn't get hired at Guitar Center, but eventually, I started being offered tours. Things started to evolve from there. I think one of my assets is that I approach every musical situation like I'm a band member, even if it's not my band. Psychologically, I try to care about every gig like that."

Tunador would become known for his nimble, multi-instrument mastery, shuttling between enviable gigs with ease. "Things have been incredibly fortuitous," he continues. "I toured with the Goo Goo Dolls for nearly two and a half years really heavily. When the band decided to take time off, I found myself looking at an entire calendar year where I'd be free. And it was then that Katy Perry's band was looking for someone, right when I had all this time off. So the timing was perfect."

In addition to his work as a sideman, Tunador released his leader debut *No Tomorrows* independently in 2010. "I'm singing and playing most of the instruments on the record," he says, "but I was smart enough to get my good buddies to play bass and drums when they were needed. But I did everything else!"

When asked how to get to where he has gotten to in the musical world, Tunador waxes more practical than poetic. "Of course, learn your instrument," he says. "But work on your singing and your Pro Tools! Those are two weapons you need to have handy these days." Jon Regen

Preview Korel's solo album *No Tomorrows*.



Korel's official site.

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KOREL'S KEYBOARD RIG

Muse Research Receptor 2 Pro Max

With the Goo Goo Dolls, I'm using Receptors exclusively. I'm probably running 13 out of the 16 channel strips full, plus I have tons of effects going on, so I use the Receptor's snapshot functionality to toggle between everything. I run off of one Receptor, and I have a duplicate that runs in parallel. Both get the same MIDI information, so if one ever goes down I can switch to the other one instantly.

Yamaha Motif ES8

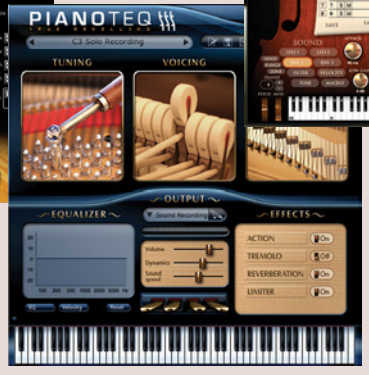
I use the Motif as my main controller, and have the same types of patches internally that I use on the Receptor. I have stereo A/B boxes at my feet on my pedalboard, so I have three layers of redundancy, just in case.

M-Audio ProKeys 88

When I was on tour with Katy Perry last year, I was using an M-Audio ProKeys 88 stage piano. I love M-Audio.

What's on Korel's Receptor?

Applied Acoustics Systems Lounge Lizard and Ultra Analog

Synthogy Ivory

Modartt Pianoteq

IK Multimedia Miroslav Philharmonik

Boi 1da (center) with the 808 Gang.

BOI 1DA

Keeping it Simple, Keeping it Loud

The Toronto transplant from Jamaica behind Drake's "Best I Ever Had," Eminem's "Not Afraid," and Soulja Boy's "Speakers Going Hammer" fine-tunes clanging, percussive beats that are deceptively simple—and exquisitely loud. Somehow, he does it all in Image-Line FL Studio 9, which is still known to its fans by its former moniker, Fruity Loops. We caught up with him to find out how.

With so many beatmakers working in FL Studio, how do you create your own niche sound?

I spend a lot of time re-recording stuff, and pre-making sounds before I put them in my beats. Also, I really spend a lot of time mixing. People say, "Oh, your stuff sounds so loud, it smacks so hard, even though it's Fruity Loops." And I'm like, "Yeah, because I spend a lot of time turning the volume up and leveling the beat."

How do you get your drums so loud?

Leave the beat open and give the rapper a lot of room to rap over it. I don't really "cluster" my beats. People enjoy the simplicity. Simple always wins. Drake likes his beats very open. For most of the songs we've done together, he's actually taken sounds *out* of my beats.

Do you mix in Fruity Loops, in addition to using it to create beats?

I mix everything in Fruity Loops. The only thing I don't do in Fruity Loops is chop up samples. I use Adobe Audition for that.

Do you think MPCs and nuts-and-bolts drum machines are done with?

In a way. I don't think I would ever use one. FL [Studio] is what I've been using since the start. If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

How do you find new drum and synth sounds that other producers aren't using?

If I have sounds that I downloaded, or if I hear something from a song, I'll combine it with other sounds that I previously had. I fuse a lot of sounds together.

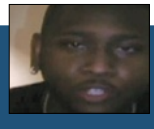
Drake's "Over" has a really unusual marching band snare that you might hear in dancehall, but not usually in hip-hop. How did that come about?

Yeah, that was the idea, but the end result was actually a mistake. I accidentally dragged the snare into the kick box and it sounded like reggae. So I kept it there. It has a new kind of bounce that hasn't been implemented in hip-hop before.

You've been working with Dr. Dre. What have you learned from him?

So much! I've learned to sit on ideas, to never throw anything away, because something could come of it. He's also why I think *mixes* are so important. They really matter. You need everything to be *loud*. A Dr. Dre beat is really, really loud. Drew Hinshaw

Our full review of FL Studio 9.



Video: Behind the scenes with Boi 1da on 50 Cent's webcast.

More Online! keyboardmag.com/january2011

WEEKEND WARRIOR

Mike Davis of Mixed Nuts

DAY GIG The Chevron refinery in Richmond, California. Our group runs transportation for the maintenance department. We work four ten-hour days per week—the perfect weekend warrior schedule.

HOW I GOT STARTED When I was seven, my dad took a night class and I tagged along. The students were learning "Love Is Blue". When the class ended, all the adults were hanging around and chatting while I sat down and played the song.

BAND Mixed Nuts plays top-40 dance tunes, rock, funk, and jazz standards from caveman days to the present—write your request on a five-dollar bill and we'll figure it out! Everyone sings lead and harmonies, so we're pretty versatile vocally. We play about six times a month, mostly in [California's] East Bay.

INFLUENCES Elton John, Chuck Leavell, and Bruce Hornsby are the piano players I aim to sound like. The Cars, Devo, and the Fixx used synths in ways that inspired me to get simple and rhythmic. David Bowie and Stevie Wonder are two artists I always seem to come back to as the ultimate songwriters.

GEAR An expanded Korg M3 sititng above a Yamaha Motif ES8. To my left, on a smaller stand, is a Roland D-550 [the rack version of the famed D-50] that I layer with the M3. I warn curious onlookers in a half-joking way, "Don't be touching my D-550—don't even look at it!" Above the M3 is an Alesis Micron, the ultimate bang-for-buck, top-40 tool. I submix everything on a Yamaha MG-10/2 mixer, and send a mono signal to our P.A. We use Shure in-ear monitors. For big outdoor gigs I use a JBL Eon powered speaker as a stage monitor.

MORE AT mixednutsband.com Ed Coury

THE EDITORS' PLAYLIST

Stephen Fortner

DVAS
Society

Think Chromeo meets Shout Out Out Out Out, only more disco (as impossible as that sounds), and you're halfway there. Four-on-the-floor kicks, huge washy synth pads, and plenty of squirty pulse wave basses and leads form the other half, and keyboardist Jered Stuffco isn't afraid to open up the filter cutoff and bathe us in analog shimmer. Add his pop-perfect falsetto, and you get a meta-ironic mélange that could easily be taken seriously as the aural backdrop for a couture runway show, or not so seriously as one of your favorite guilty pleasures. In addition, you've gotta love the fact that Stuffco plays a Juno-106 and an old Ensoniq ESQ-1 in the video for the title track. Irresistible party music! (Upper Class Recordings | dvasmusique.com)

FREEZEPOP
Imaginary Friends

I'm on a synth pop kick this month, and with great music like *Imaginary Friends* coming out, who wouldn't be? Take the analog sound palette of the first two Eurythmics albums, add the bright, dance-anthem song structures of Erasure, then process female vocals to a disco-ball shine *à la* Human League, and you have the latest from cult darlings Freezepop. The appeal here is more than cult, though, ranging from those of us who actually saw John Hughes movies in theaters to the electro-leaning DJs we sometimes refer to as "these kids today." Tracks like "Natural Causes" and "Lady Spider" are just as suited to remixing by the latter as to cranking up in the Priuses of the former. Whichever way you enjoy *Imaginary Friends*, do it with your real ones—this is New Year's Eve on a disc. (Archenemy | freezepop.com)

Jon Regen

BRIAN CHARETTE
Learning to Count

New York City-based jazz organist and composer Brian Charette returns with the swirling, saxophone-peppered release *Learning to Count*. Charette's slinky, Larry Young-like organ tones *and* tunes shine here, especially alongside the dirty grooves of fellow bandmates Mike DiRubbo and Jochen Ruckert. Check out the track "Air On a Fast String" for an example of Charette's modern take on a timeless sound. (Steeple Chase | myspace.com/briancharette1)

SEVEN SATURDAYS
The Snowflakes That Hit Us Became Our Stars

The latest release by the Los Angeles ambient experimenters Seven Saturdays is a shimmering, soaring, instrumental soliloquy. Helmed by composer and orchestrator Jonathan D. Haskell, the album marries electric piano, French spoken word, vintage wall-of-sound pop production, and dramatic synthesized filter sweeps into a singular sonic canvas. Cuts like "Au Revoir" and "Early Morning Fog Bank" foreshadow the band's impending breakout success—and the whole thing is a pay-what-you-want digital download. (sevensaturdaysmusic.com)

SCOTT CHASOLEN
Fracture

Keyboardist Scott Chasolen is best known for his prog-minded work with Pink Floyd tribute band the Machine, but his solo release *Fracture* is sure to get the word out about his budding career as a singer-songwriter. On tunes like "Novocaine" and "There She Goes Again," Chasolen melds classic keyboards such as the Minimoog, Clavinet, and Rhodes with hooky choruses and deft band interplay. *Fracture* is raucous, retro-minded keyboard pop that's worth a spin on your music player of choice. (scottchasolen.com)

Robbie Gennet

THE LIKE
Release Me

The Like may look and sound like they just took a time machine in from the '60s, but beneath the go-go girl image beats the pulse of modern rock. Producer Mark Ronson paints their sound with precision, from the jangly guitars, tambourines, and handclaps to the inimitable Farfisa organ played by talented newcomer Annie Monroe. She perfectly captures the mood and vibe of a bygone era while applying thoughtful and melodic keyboard parts throughout. (Downtown | myspace.com/thelike)

AISLES
In Sudden Walks

Hailing from Chile, Aisles is making big strides in the global prog scene. Keyboardists Luis Vergara and Alejandro Melendez share synth duties. There are echoes of modern prog groups like Porcupine Tree, yet Aisles mixes Latin rhythms into prog's odd time signatures, over a solid rock foundation of amazing drumming from Felipe Candia. From the theatrical dialog and trumpet parts in "Mariachi" through the metal bridge in "The Maiden" to the lovely piano outro to "Smile of Tears," the album has plenty of diversity and character. (Presagio | aislesproject.com)

KRISTIAN HOFFMAN
Fop

It's too easy to compare *Fop* to orchestral pop greats such as the Moody Blues or Brian Wilson's Beach Boys, but one can't help notice the classic stylings of Hoffman's production and songwriting. Songs like the harpsichord-and-piano ballad "Cassandra" or the dramatic opening track "Something New is Born" deserve multiple listens; the first time through, you go on a journey that begs paying more attention the second. *Fop* is one of the most original pop records of the year. (Kayo Stereophonic | kristianhoffman.com)

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NEW GEAR

by Stephen Fortner

AVID PRO TOOLS 9

Concept: Replaces Pro Tools LE—and by popular demand, works with any CoreAudio or ASIO interface.

Big deal: Previously extra-cost options like Music Production and DV Toolkits and DigiTranslator are now included. Automatic delay compensation and MP3 export now supported. EuCon makes for deep integration with Euphonix Artist control surfaces.

We think: You talked, Avid listened, and PT may well reclaim its crown as the DAW to beat. Plus, we've seen the EuCon thing work and it's really slick.

List: $599 | LE crossgrade: $249 | M-Powered crossgrade: $349 | avid.com

TASCAM US-1800

Concept: More inputs than any USB audio interface in its class.

Big deal: Sixteen simultaneous ins: eight XLR mic pres and two line/guitar jacks on the front, four balanced line ins on the back, and stereo S/PDIF. Four balanced outs. MIDI. Goes to 24-bit/96kHz.

We think: Spend most of your money on keyboards that you'd now like to plug in all at once? Look no further.

List: $399.99 | Approx. street: $300 | tascam.com

NATIVE INSTRUMENTS GEORGE DUKE SOUL TREASURES

Concept: Kontakt Player instrument of funky riffs and phrases played by the keyboard legend.

Big deal: Duke recorded over 500 original licks exclusively for NI, using his personal grand piano, Rhodes, Wurly, and Clavinet. Includes versions recorded through tube preamps onto analog tape for even more vintage vibe.

We think: With all the celebrity sample libraries out there, it's about time a musician of Duke's immense talent and taste got one of his own.

List: $119 | Approx. street: $99 | native-instruments.com

SSL NUCLEUS

Concept: Analog front end, audio interface, and control surface in a single studio nerve center.

Big deal: Two mic/line/guitar preamps identical to those on SSL's Duality console, with balanced insert points. Motorized 100mm faders. HUI and MCU over Ethernet. Switches between three DAWs. Monitor control. Duende native plug-ins included.

We think: Add computer and software, and you have a high-end SSL recording studio on your desktop. We'd like to see a few more line ins for keyboards, though.

$4,995 (no list/street difference) | solid-state-logic.com

See tons of videos of these products and others from the 2010 AES convention at keyboardmag.com/article/122903.

CAKEWALK SONAR X1 PRODUCER

Concept: The biggest revamp to the Windows DAW since Cakewalk Pro Audio became Sonar.

Big deal: Skylight configures mixer, arrange window, inspector, and media browser in an elegant single-window interface. MultiDock follows whatever you're focused on. ProChannel provides SSL-style console EQ and bus compression, as well as tube saturation modeling.

We think: It'll delight Sonar power users and convert more than a few haters. Check out our exclusive first look at keyboardmag.com/video.

List: $499 | Approx street: $400 | cakewalk.com

KORG iMS-20

Concept: Faithful replica of the MS-20 patchable analog synth for the Apple iPad.

Big deal: Absolutely *nails* the MS-20 sound. Virtual patch cords. Includes six-part drum machine, mixer, and sequencer modeled on Korg's SQ-10.

We think: It sounds so good, and is so much fun, that you might run out and buy an iPad just to have it.

$15.99 in the iTunes App Store | korg.com/ims20

MUSIC COMPUTING iKEY DOCK

Concept: Provides keys, controls, audio interfacing, and real estate for your music laptop of choice.

Big deal: Built around PreSonus audio interfaces. Custom GeoMIDI software for mapping the generous complement of onboard controls.

We think: We like the idea of a controller keyboard that's also your laptop stand. Definitely products to watch.

61 keys: $1,499 direct | 88 keys: $1,799 direct | musiccomputing.com

BLUE MICS SPARK

Concept: Premium cardioid condenser mic at an entry-level price.

Big deal: Same capsule design as Blue's far more expensive studio mics. Beautiful cosmetics and rugged construction. Comes with shock mount and pop filter.

We think: You have to hold one to appreciate the fit and finish, and there's no bigger bang-for-buck for your first "good mic."

Street: $199 | bluemic.com

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David C. Lovelace,
KEYBOARD magazine

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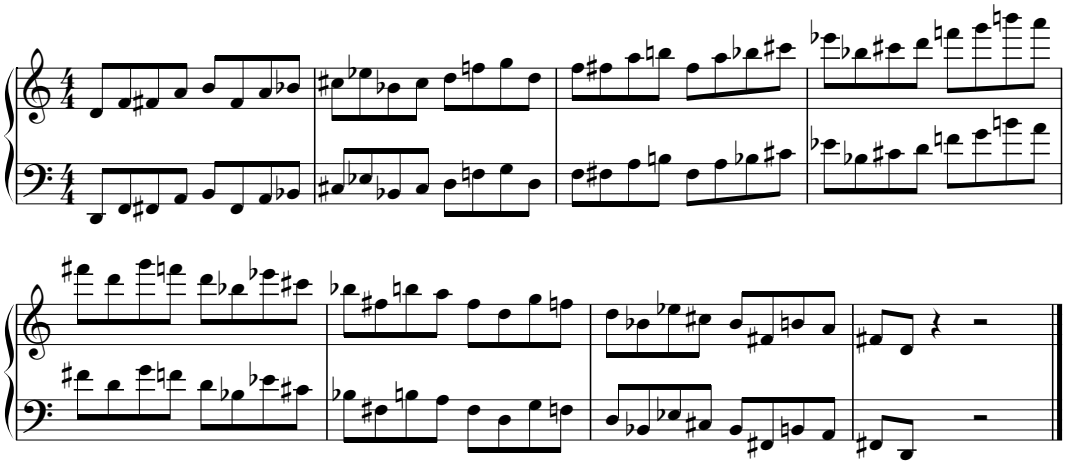
At just 23 years old, Grammy-nominated pianist **Eldar Djangirov** is one of the most sought-after musicians on the jazz scene today. Eldar is currently on tour in support of his 2009 Sony album, *Virtue*. He's due to release its follow-up, *Three Stories*, in April 2011, featuring originals, standards, and classical works. Find out more at eldarjazz.com and facebook.com/eldar. Jon Regen

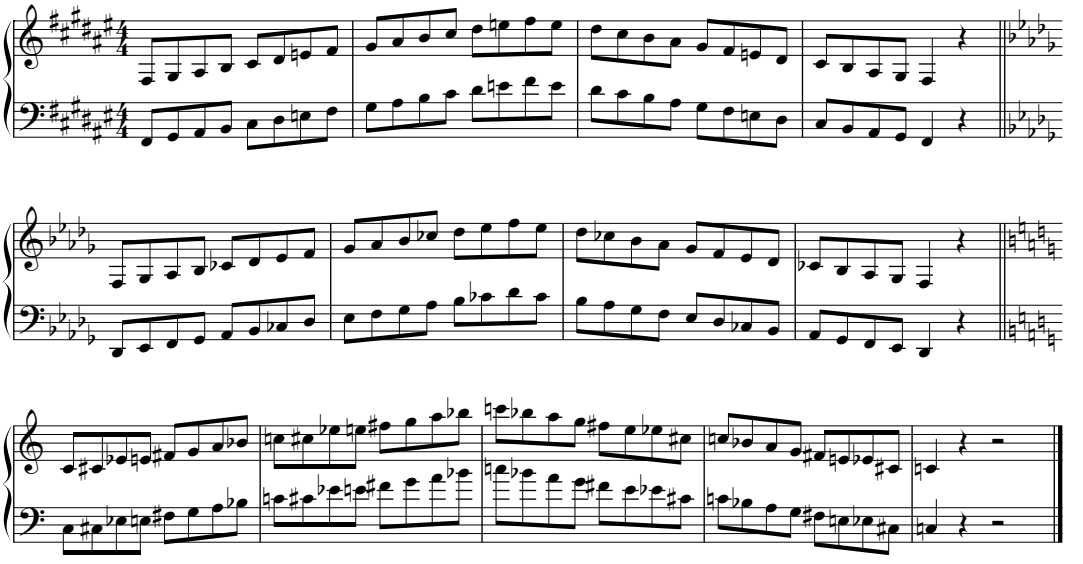
Eldar's POWER WARM-UPS

by Eldar Djangirov

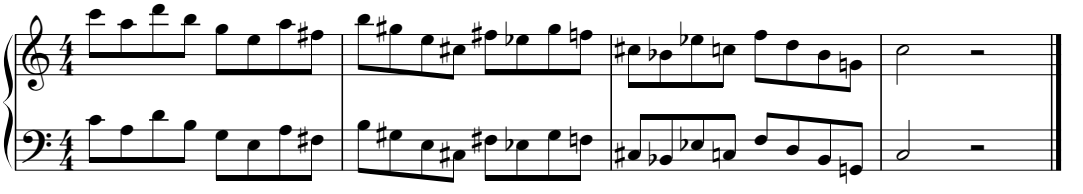
Before practicing at home or performing live, I always begin with a warm-up exercise. Warming up has been an essential part of my musical routine since I was five years old. Not only does it help improve my technique and dexterity, it also protects me against injury. Limbering up your hands and arms helps you make a strong mind-body connection with your instrument and your music. Here are four exercises on which I rely.

1. Major Thirds Workout

This is a warm-up that can be practiced in all 12 keys. Here, it goes up and down in major thirds. Always keep both hands synced throughout the exercise, and keep the fingering consistent. The fingering should go up in both hands sequentially, *i.e.* 1-2-3-4-5, until the last turnaround, when the fingering changes to set up the return. Note that each segment is five notes. Begin this exercise by holding down the first note and continuing the rest of the segment staccato. Do the same going back down, but remember that you will be holding down the opposite fingers. As with most exercises, don't use the sustain pedal—use only your fingers for dynamic expression, control, tone, and consistency. Without sustain, you'll be better able to judge your clarity of execution.

2. Scale Practice

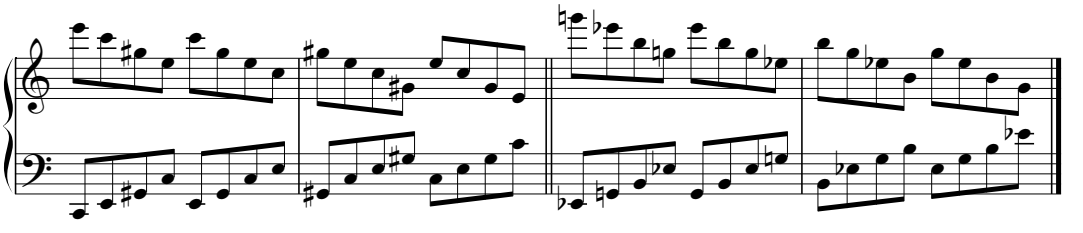
Scales done in different variations can be great warm-up exercises. **Ex. 2** incorporates the dominant scale in the key of *F*♯, along with the *D*♭ dominant scale, played with the interval of a tenth between the left and right hands. It's important to play this as evenly as possible, with both hands synced. Execution should be clean and clear. This exercise helps develop finger control, while simultaneously offering a great warm-up. To add an extra challenge, use the *C* major fingering for your right hand, (1-2-3, 1-2-3-4), and apply it to all 12 keys. Try the same with the left hand fingering. This will make your fingers move in ways you wouldn't normally use them, eventually adding more control that will spread to other areas of your playing.

3. Descending Diminished Tones

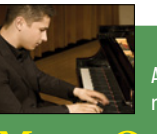
Ex. 3 is a pattern based on descending diminished tones. Try this in all 12 keys. It can be also used as an improvisational point in the appropriate situation. Practice each hand separately and make sure that both hands are able to play with clarity and confidence. As it tends to be weaker, pay special attention to the left hand, and practice separately if needed.



4. Augmented Arpeggios

Ex. 4 incorporates augmented arpeggios. Note how the left hand comes up and the right hand comes down. Arpeggios are terrific ways to warm up. Try moving your hands in the opposite direction for an added challenge. Make sure your sound is even when playing this—each finger should press down with an *even* strength, producing a tone that's consistent throughout in both hands.





Audio examples recorded by Eldar.

Eldar live at the Blue Note and the Vienna Jazz Festival.

More Online! keyboardmag.com/january2011

Our February 1983 cover photo of Herbie Hancock, by Neil Zlozower.

5 Ways To Play Like HERBIE HANCOCK

by George Colligan

When you think of modern jazz piano, Herbie Hancock might be the first name that comes to mind. While many know Hancock from crossover hits like "Chameleon" and "Rockit," his influence crosses all stylistic boundaries. He began his piano career performing Mozart with the Chicago Symphony at age 11. It wasn't until a friend introduced him to pianists George Shearing and Oscar Peterson that he became interested in jazz. Hancock soon became in demand as an accompanist throughout the 1960s, appearing on many classic Blue Note recordings. He was also one of the first jazz artists to use the Rhodes electric piano and synthesizers, not to mention vocoders and "keytars." Regardless of the style he plays, Hancock's playing has certain trademarks. Here are five of them.

Pianist, composer, and educator **George Colligan** has worked with Cassandra Wilson, Buster Williams, Don Byron, Ravi Coltrane, and many others. Most recently, he joined drummer Jack DeJohnette's new quintet. Colligan has appeared on over 100 CDs, 19 of them as a leader. His latest release is *Come Together* on the Sunnyside label. Colligan is Assistant Professor of Jazz Piano at the University of Manitoba. Find out more at georgecolligan.com. Jon Regen

1. Harmony

Hancock is widely admired for his adventurous chord voicings, but the foundations of his style are actually rather conventional. **Ex. 1a** is a typical left hand *Cmin7* voicing that Hancock might solo over. The *Cmin7* and *F13♭9* are *tertian,* or built on thirds, while the *D♭maj7* to *Dmaj7* in **Ex. 1b** are *quartal*, or built on fourths. The voicings in **Ex. 1c** are much like those in Hancock's seminal tune "Maiden Voyage." These can be thought of as chords with a bass note and a triad based on the flat seventh, which imparts a suspended kind of sound. However, musicians close to Hancock say that he typically thinks of the correlating *minor* sound here: For example, *D7* or *Dsus* would be approached as *Am7* over *D*. Finally, **Ex. 1d** illustrates more dissonant Hancock voicings which are essentially *polychords*.

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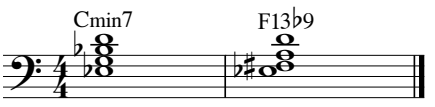
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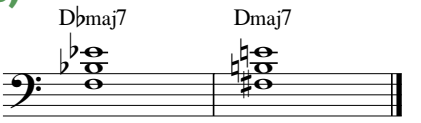

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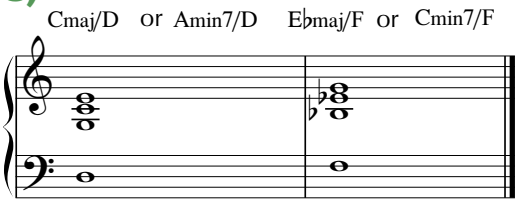

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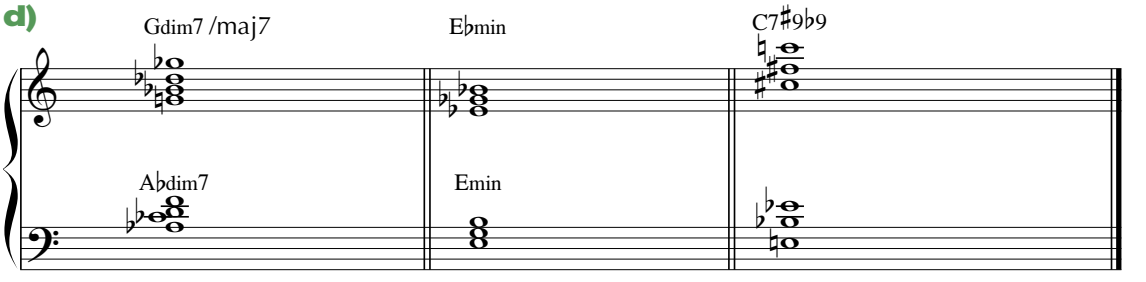
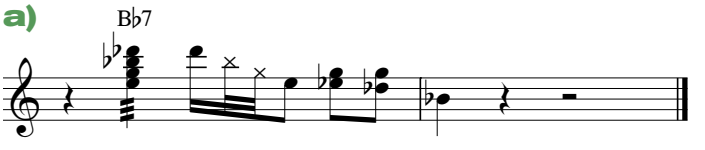


2. Blues

I often think of Hancock as a highly creative blues musician, because there always seems to be an inherent blues component to his playing. The first examples **Ex. 2a**, **2b**, and **2c** are all reflective of his study of Oscar Peterson. These ideas have a rolling kind of sound, as if to imitate a human voice or a horn. **Ex. 2d** (page 28) is typical of a passage where Hancock might combine more sophisticated elements while still adding his usual bluesy inflection.

a)

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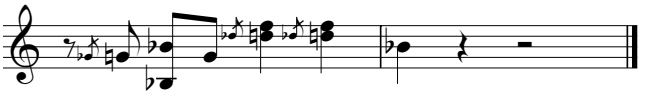
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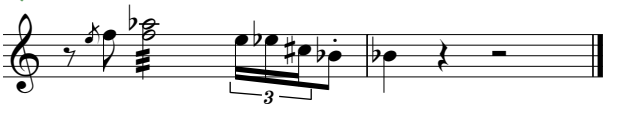
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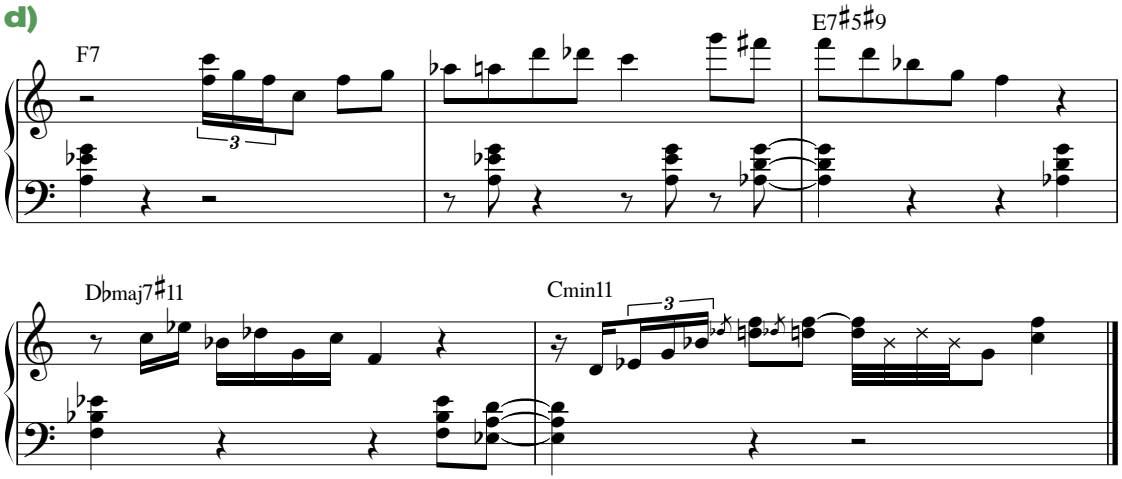
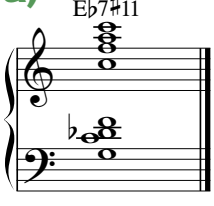

3. Comping and Reharmonization

In his early career, Hancock was in high demand as a sideman because of his sensitive accompaniment. He's known for an incredible sense of touch on the piano, and for *listening* while he comps, so he can interact with a soloist's ideas while leaving space and creating drama. Sometimes, he'll fill out a chord with what we call an *upper structure*, which is a triad that gives us the alterations of a seventh chord. The *E*♭*7♯11* chord in **Ex. 3a** is expanded by using an *F* triad, which is a triad based on the second or ninth of the *E*♭ chord. Note that this voicing could also be used for an *A7♯9♯5* chord. The phrase in **Ex. 3b** is something that Hancock might play on a Clavinet, using a percussive attack between the right and left hands to get a Stevie Wonder-esque sound. **Ex. 3c** illustrates Hancock's re-harmonization techniques, using *E* as the bass note.

a)



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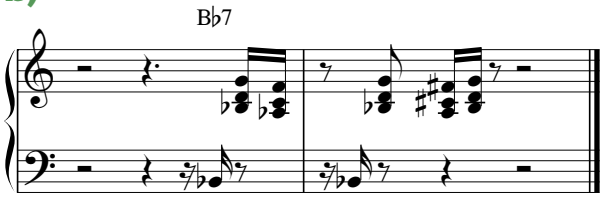

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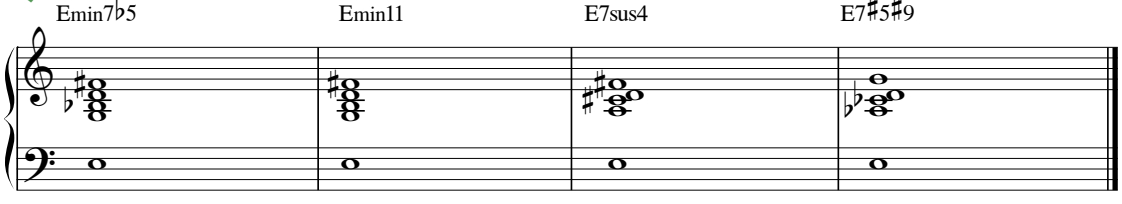

4. Lines and Shapes

Hancock has an amazing sense of linear improvisation, at times reminiscent of bebop pianists such as Bud Powell and Wynton Kelly. **Ex. 4a** illustrates just that type of melodic line. **Ex. 4b** (page 30) demonstrates another typical phrase used by Hancock. **Ex. 4c** (page 30) is our old friend the diminished scale, which Hancock uses quite frequently. This scale is useful because of its symmetrical nature, which makes it ripe for developing your own patterns.

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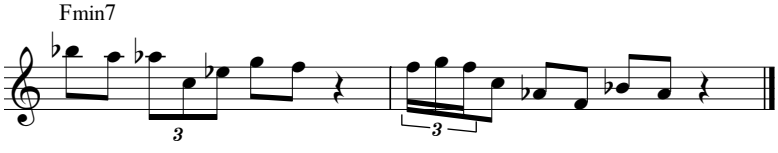
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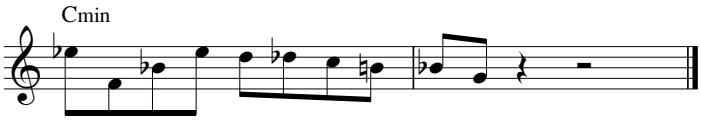
b)

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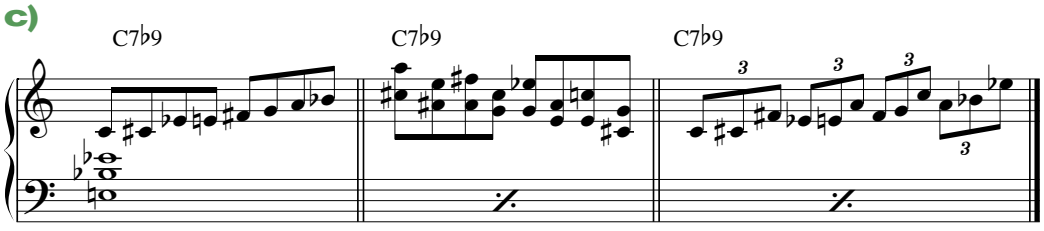
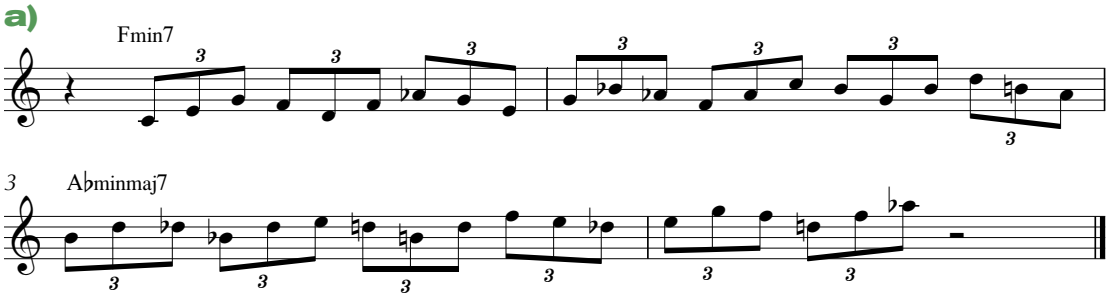

5. Rhythmic and Thematic Development

Hancock has an amazing sense of rhythmic variety in his playing. He's able to do things like playing four-note groups of triplets, as in **Ex. 5a**, all the way through a chord sequence without getting lost. He's also known for playing strong rhythms across the bar line, such as the *Gdim/maj7/Fdim7* in **Ex. 5b**. This is essentially a five-over-four rhythm. **Ex. 5c** illustrates Hancock's use of the *triadic linear device* combined with octaves, using repeated passages that help build tension.

a)



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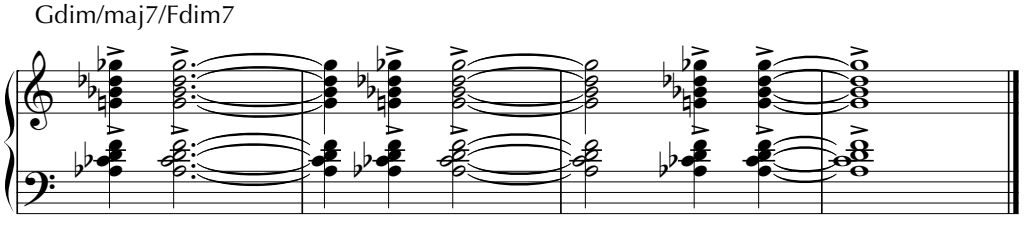

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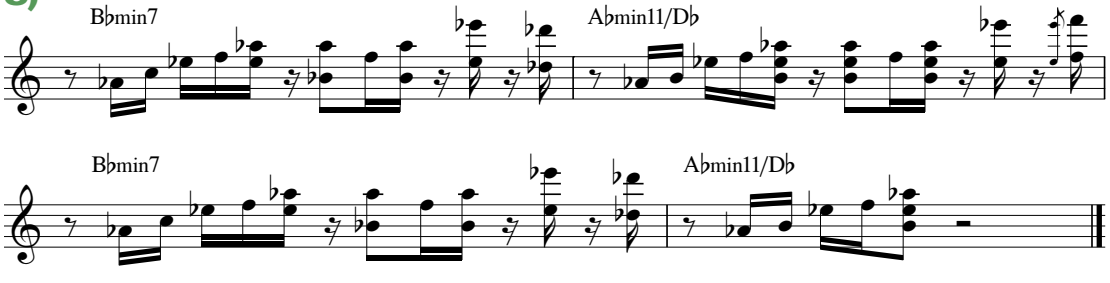

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How to program Herbie's "Chameleon" bass sound.

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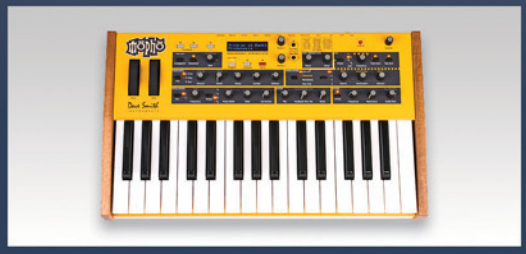

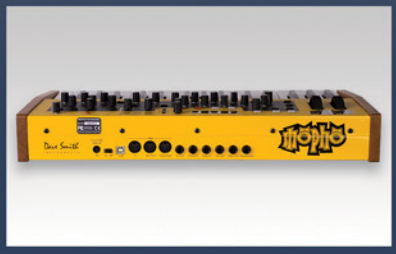

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5 Ways To Play Like BILL EVANS

by Andy LaVerne

It's hard to believe it's been 30 years since the revolutionary jazz pianist Bill Evans left us at the all too young age of 51. Evans was, and still is, among the most influential jazz pianists of the past sixty years. His effect on modern jazz piano was so profound, he actually influenced pianists whose fame both followed his own (Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, and Brad Mehldau), and *preceded* it (Teddy Wilson, George Shearing, and Oscar Peterson). On both sides of this generational divide, pianists who heard Bill Evans altered their own playing as a result. There's no doubt that had Bill survived to his 81st birthday, he would have added many more ways to this "five ways" list. He left it to us to add to such lists ourselves. That's what he wanted, after all.

1. Left-Hand Rootless Voicings

Bill Evans single-handedly changed the sound of jazz piano—literally, with his left hand! His four-note, rootless chord voicings consist of *guide tones* (thirds and sevenths), along with chord tones, color tones, extensions, and/or alterations. These compact voicings also have inherently smooth *voice leading*. **Ex. 1a** is a ii-V-I progression in the key of *C*. Play these voicings with your right hand while playing the roots with your left to get used to the root movement. Then play them with your left hand alone. To practice, transpose up in half steps to the key of *F*. This position is often referred to as the "A-form." **Ex. 1b** shows the "B-form" of these voicings, and covers the keys of *F*♯ major through *B* major. These use the same notes as the A-form, but in a different configuration. In **Ex. 1c**, we see the A-form of rootless voicings for a ii-V-i progression in minor. Notice the altered dominant voicings are the same as the unaltered dominant voicings: a tritone (or raised fourth) away, in the opposite form. And in **Ex. 1d**, we see how to construct the B-form of rootless voicings for a ii-V-i in minor.

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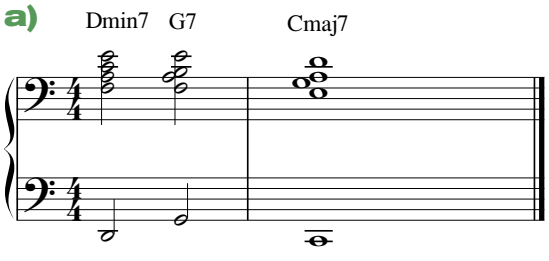

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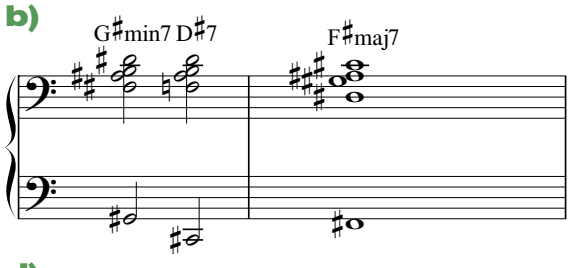

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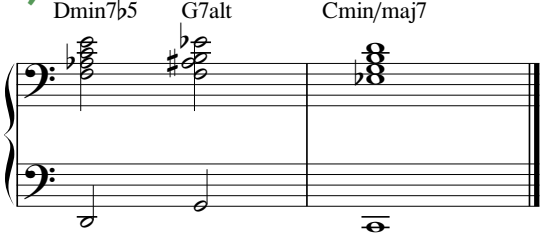

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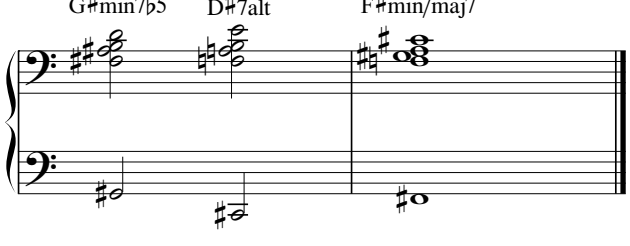

2. Right-Hand Devices

Evans' lyrical right-hand lines often ended up in the higher reaches of the keyboard as a result of the position of his left-hand voicings. **Ex. 2a** illustrates how Bill often used the notes from his left-hand voicings in his right-hand lines. Here is a signature lick of his over a ii-V-i progression in *C* minor. In **Ex. 2b**, we see his trademark *scale tone* and *chromatic triad* usage. Notice the triad pair of *E*♭ major and *D*♭ major over the *G*7 altered (♯9♭*13*) chord. These triads are scale tone triads of the *G* altered scale (or *A*♭ melodic minor). The *E* major triad is a *chromatic* triad. The triads over the *Cmin6* chord are all scale tone triads taken from the *C* melodic minor scale.

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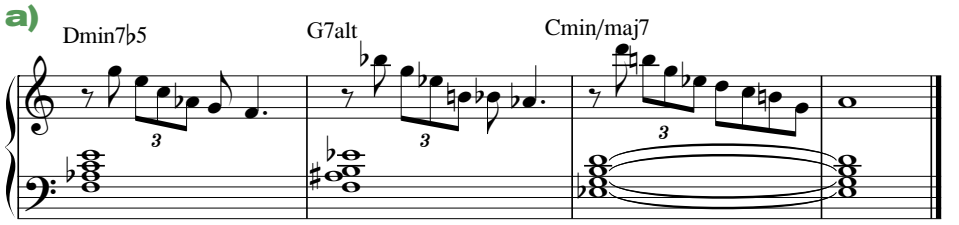
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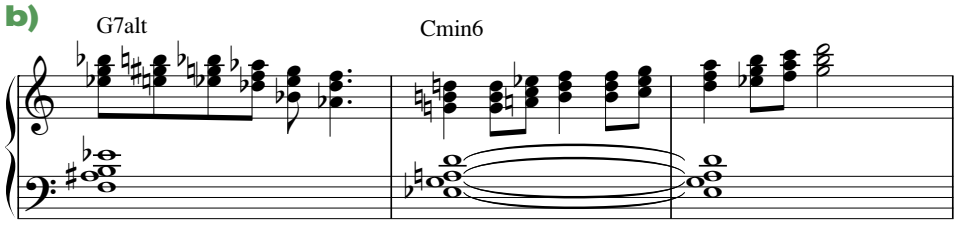
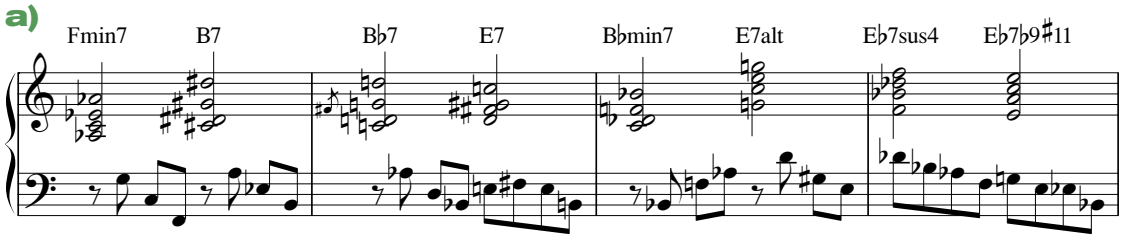


3. Harmonic and Rhythmic Devices

Evans was a master of both harmonic and rhythmic innovation. **Ex. 3a** is a series of ii-V progressions. By adding dominant seventh *chromatic approach* chords, Evans could enhance and expand a common harmonic progression. Note his trademark, subtle use of the grace note of the fifth going to the ♯*5* (or ♭*13*) in the *B*♭*7* chord. His left-hand accompaniment often created a counter-melody to the right hand, and kept things moving. Note how in **Ex. 3b**, Evans takes a typical II-V-III-VI turnaround progression and changes the V chord to a ♯II diminished chord. This subtle alteration creates unexpected harmonic interest.

a)



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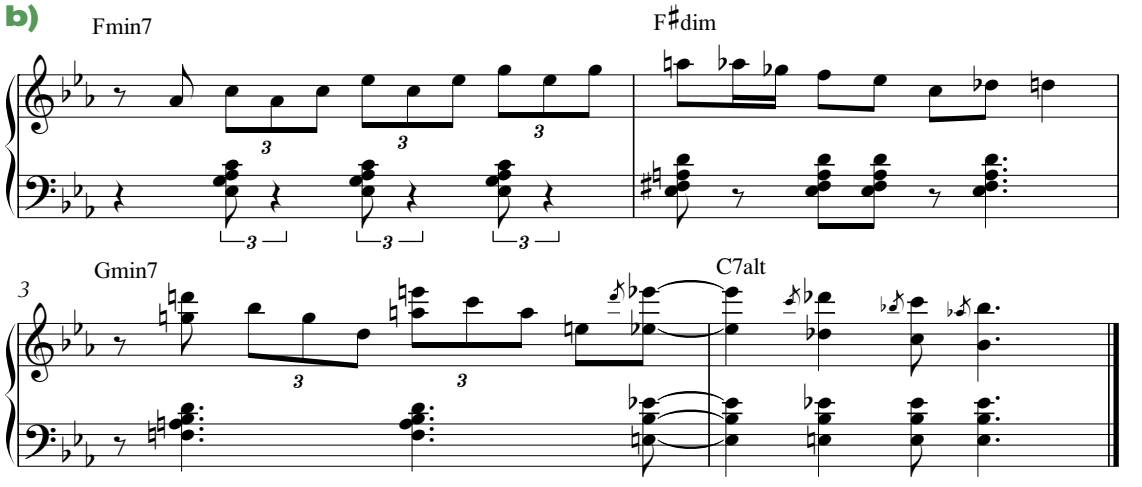
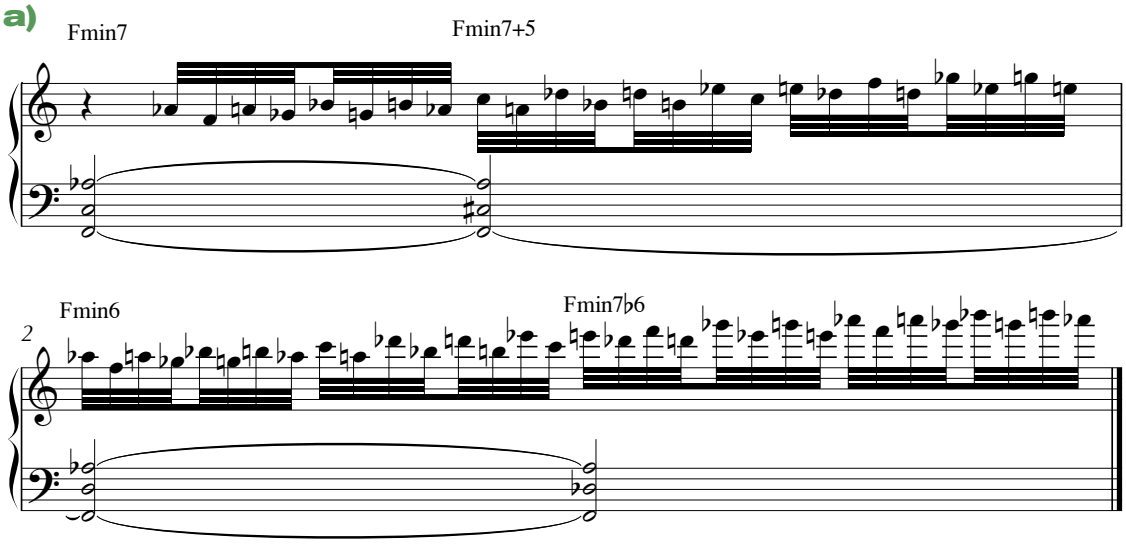


4. Inner Voice Movement

Evans' introspective style gave rise to frequent *inner voice movement*, which infused a contrapuntal component into his playing. **Ex. 4a** (page 34) illustrates a favorite Evans device for a minor chord. Here we see the inner voice movement of the fifth: *5*, ♯*5*, *6*, ♭*6*, and *5*. His use of intervallic minor thirds ascending chromatically in the right hand let him play over any harmonic movement without playing the actual chord changes. **Ex. 4b** (page 34) shows inner voice movement within a ii-V-I progression. Evans was also one of the first jazz pianists to incorporate strings of sixteenth-notes interspersed with sixteenth-note triplets.

a)



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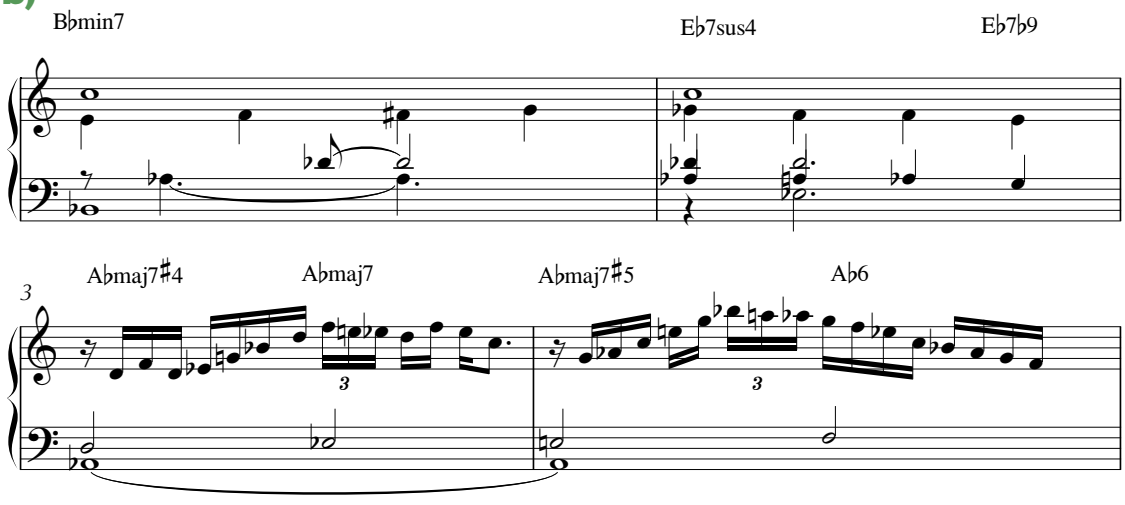
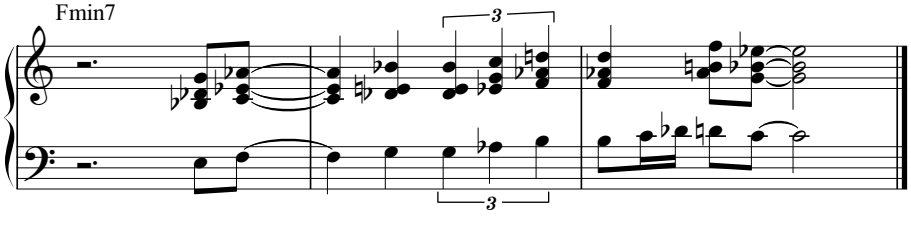
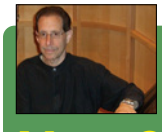


5. Locked Hands Technique

Evans often jokingly referred to himself as "king of the locked hands." This technique, first developed by pianists like Nat "King" Cole and George Shearing, utilized *four-way close* chord voicings with the top note doubled down an octave. Bill modernized these four-way close structures by taking the note second from the top and dropping it an octave. This became known as a "drop two" voicing. **Ex. 5** illustrates this difficult but effective technique to harmonize melodies. Notice more triplets in the right hand (this time quarter-note triplets), a signature Evans rhythm.





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Jazz pianist, composer, and longtime *Keyboard* contributor **Andy LaVerne** has played and recorded with such renowned artists as Frank Sinatra, Stan Getz, and Chick Corea. A Professor of Jazz Piano at the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford, his latest CD is entitled *Live From NY!* Visit him at andylaverne.com. Jon Regen

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Answers Your Questions

Edited by Stephen Fortner

"I'm a techno producer and Rick Wakeman is my favorite keyboard player of all time," wrote Wesley R. Dysart on our Facebook page. "I will never get tired of his music or his interviews. He's a major influence on how I *try* to play!" We couldn't have summed up the influence of Rick Wakeman better. While it comes as no surprise that the most memorable keyboardist from supergroup Yes is flagged as a hero by nearly every *rock* keyboardist we hear from, we're continually impressed by the number of musicians working in electronica, hip-hop, and other genres you wouldn't think have anything to do with baroque-influenced progressive rock, who say the very same thing. As we did last month with Wakeman's colleague in greatness Keith Emerson, we wanted you, our readers, to do the interview. Since our original posts on the Keyboard Corner forum (forums.musicplayer.com) and Facebook (facebook.com/KeyboardMagazine) called for your questions for Keith and Rick at the same time, many of the questions will look familiar if you read last month's issue.

[*As in last month's cover story, we've identified questions by your user names, typed as you type them online. –Ed.*]

tonysounds: *Of all the gear you've owned and played, which is your favorite instrument, bar none? And of the synths you no longer own, which one do you miss the most?*
Rick Wakeman: The piano will always be the one I could never live without. On the piano, the true expression comes from the fingertips, and you have total control. I suppose that's because it was the instrument I learned on from the age of five. So it's bound to be the one I'm most attached to.

Of synths I no longer own, the answer would probably be the [Sequential Circuits] Prophet-10, with the double-manual keyboard. It was initially misconstrued as just a dual-manual Prophet-5, but this wasn't the case. It was a different instrument in its own right. I wish I still had mine.

johnchop: *Which recent developments in music technology excite you the most as a means to musical expression? For example, soft synths? The resurgence of analog?*
RW: As with all technology, it's a matter of you being in control of it, rather than it controlling you. I see all technological tools as items on my musical shelf, and when needed, I take them off the shelf to use them. Accordingly, the '80s and some of the '90s were, sadly, driven by technology rather than music, but hopefully, things are turning full circle.

Bill H.: *What work are you most proud of? And the flip side of the coin: Is there any session you wish you could do over?*
RW: Political answer here: I'd name a different one every day! At the moment, it's probably [the performance of] *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* at Hampton Court. It truly closed the book on this work for me in every way possible. But, ask me tomorrow, and you might get a different answer.

As to work I wish I could do over, no, to be honest. There are some things I wasn't happy with, but they were what they were at the time. You can't go back and try to repair.

16251: *I remember when I first heard "Roundabout" and all those wonderful keyboard parts. When you soloed on the classic albums, how much of it was improvisation and how much was worked out beforehand?*
RW: The solo on "Roundabout" was recorded in one take, and inspired by [drummer] Bill Bruford. He said to me to hold back during runthroughs in the studio, but when the red recording light came on, to "go for it." And that was the take we kept—so thank you, Bill! I've kept to that rule ever since.

Jeff Klopmeyer: *I'm a seasoned live performer and inexplicably run into random episodes of stage fright, even after hundreds of live shows. What*

LEE WILKINSON

do you think triggers that, and what can be done to prevent it?
RW: I know lots of people who have had stage fright all their lives. Remember that the brain is "monophonic"—it can only concentrate on one thing at a time. So when panic sets in, take your brain back to the music itself. If your brain is enjoying making and hearing the music, it won't have time to be afraid.

The Real MC: *What are your memories of Bob Moog?*
RW: I loved the man to bits. Keith Emerson and I did a three-man interview with Bob some years back in New York, and it was magical. The man gave keyboard players the respect—and the instrument—that we all craved.

Bosendorphin: *Is there any possibility you and Keith Emerson would tour together in more intimate settings?*
RW: I'd love to work with Keith on a project. We've talked about it, and it's certainly high up on my list. I'm not sure that what we might want to do would suit intimate venues, though.

McGoo: *I've noticed you're not big on using pitch and modulation wheels—at least not in the sense of players such as Jan Hammer. Can you discuss?*
RW: I tend to play with my eyes closed, so honestly, I'm not sure which knobs I twiddle or which wheels I bend! [*Laughs.*]

tarkus: *Outside of your bandmates in Yes, who was the best musician you've played with?*
RW: That's like asking if a baseball player is better than a footballer. Different styles and different instruments make it hard to compare musicians who are all excellent. One standout as regards bass players, though, is John Entwistle. I miss him both as a player and as a friend. [*The Who's John Entwistle passed away in June of 2002. —Ed.*]

wjk: *You get your pick of four people for your dream band—living or deceased, but no one that you've played publicly with before.*
RW: Ah—another question with different daily answers! Today, it would be John Entwistle on bass, Pete Townshend on guitar, John Bonham on drums, and Dick Heckstall-Smith on saxophone. The question didn't specifically mention a singer, but if one was meant, then Janis Joplin.

Mark Zeger: *What piece of work do you consider to be the high-water mark of your compositional life so far? What single piece most says, "This is who I am"?*
RW: If I was really put on the spot, then (as I'd answered Mr. Bill H.) it would have to be *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* at Hampton Court.

Tom A.: *Please expound on the plusses and minuses of high-quality, cheap home recording equipment having lowered the bar for performers to create high-quality recordings.*
RW: Well, since anyone can make a record nowadays, that means you have millions of songs out there on different websites, 99 percent of which will never get listened to. It's true that high-quality recordings can be achieved quite cheaply, but that doesn't mean the *music* is high-quality—in many cases, it isn't.

wjk: *If you could pick one piece of music from Keith Emerson's catalog that you wished you had written, which would it be?*
RW: I'm a huge fan of all of Keith's work, so again, it might be a different answer every day. That said, *Tarkus* is certainly right up there.

Hammodel AV: *Was there an underlying social or musical culture that made English musicians essentially create the genre of prog rock?*
RW: Not that I can put my finger on. Although, drawing from history certainly was important to my work.

Jimmie McClure: *How do you personally handle song recall* [i.e., *recall of patch setups for a large, multi-keyboard rig*]*?*
RW: I use a device that's very old called a Sycologic. I'd like to buy at least one more as a spare, so if anyone knows of one for sale, please let me know.

Wesley R. Dysart: *What inspires you, and how do you connect with the source of your creativity?*
RW: Honestly, I have no idea. It's the true unknown. I do believe though, that if you *look* for it, you'll actually *lose* the source of your creativity. So don't look!

Brian Burgon: *When you first started playing synthesizers, did you ever imagine that synths and workstations would be able to do the things they can now?*
RW: Believe it or not, I *did* foresee what was going to happen. I worked closely with Korg in Japan, as, indeed, Keith Emerson did. Even then, you could see [the synthesizer] was the ideal instrument to develop. I mean, there wasn't much more people could do with guitars and drums.

Ron Cholfin: *If you could only have two keyboards to use onstage, which two would you pick, and why?*
RW: It depends on the type of show. For a big rock show, I'd pick a Korg M3 and a Minimoog. For a more intimate show, acoustic piano and either the Roland Fantom-X8 or the Korg OASYS—both with 88-note weighted keyboards.

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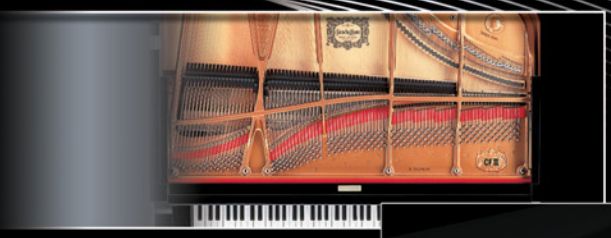

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Ron Cholfin (continued): *Are there any keyboards you've regretted using? What was the worst gear nightmare of your career?*
RW: The Mellotron. It had a great sound, but disastrous build and design.

Rey Gonzales: *Do you use software-based synths?*
RW: Only when doing demos or when working on specific orchestral tracks. Never live onstage. I feel that they're too fraught with problems.

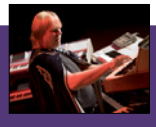
Thalia Stevens: *In classical music, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Chopin, and most of the greats all had students to commemorate their technique. Any plans to join their ranks by offering master classes or other methods of study for modern-day keyboard students?*
RW: I always said I never would, but I am an honorary professor at the London College of Music, and have also gotten involved with my own old college, the Royal College of Music, so who knows? I always said I wouldn't, but the way you put your question has set me to thinking.

Roger Dale Huff: *With regard to playing keyboards in rock and using synthesizers in interesting ways, do you ever feel like "it's all been done" and there are no more worlds to conquer?*
RW: That's like saying no more books should be written because all the words have been used before. I've never felt like that and I never will. There's tons of stuff to be done.

Juan Oskar JayMaynes: *How do you develop your modal riffs? And how do you create alternative chord changes to standard songs?*
RW: [I develop modal riffs] by not thinking about what I'm doing. As to alternative chord changes, I studied composition and arrangement at college and this was one of the regular exercises we did. So it's sort of inbuilt in me now.

Tim Wat: *You and Keith Emerson have influenced more than one generation of keyboard players, and the way rock music thinks about keyboards. With that in mind, what still drives you to create? What still excites you about playing after accomplishing so much in your career?*
RW: I was asked once what inscription I wanted on my gravestone, and I answered, "It's not fair—I haven't finished yet!" That says it all, really. I have so many musical things that I want to do, and I know that time is running out. Music is so exciting, and every day it's a joy to know that there's more music to be made. New thoughts, new melodies . . . the day I lose that feeling will be the day I stop. But that won't happen.

Miss last month's issue? Read the cover story online.



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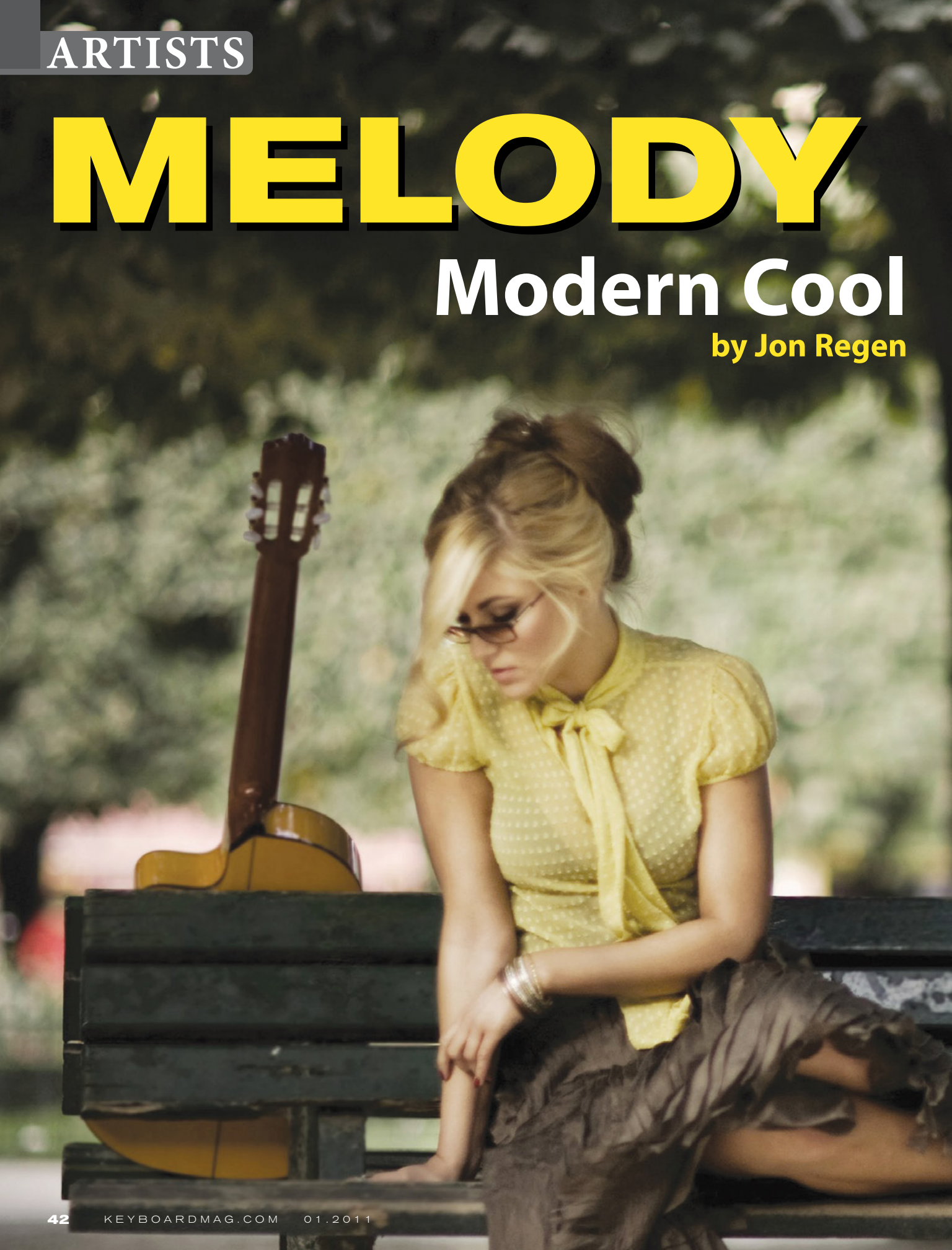
MELODY

Modern Cool

by Jon Regen



GARDOT

"Why has this taken so long?" Melody Gardot asks jokingly, after a rare gap in her schedule allows time for her first-ever interview in *Keyboard*. Gardot, whose albums *Worrisome Heart* and *My One and Only Thrill* have catapulted the 25-year-old pianist and chanteuse to worldwide acclaim, is part Beat poet and part torch singer. She sings in hushed tones, wrapping her sometimes mournful lyrics around beds of impressionistic piano chords. One minute, she's playing a string of standing-room-only dates at Paris' famed Olympia Theater, the next she's headlining in New York's Central Park.

Gardot's rise to stardom is a tale of heartbreak and hope. In 2003, she was struck by an SUV while riding her bike. The accident left her bedridden and unable to walk for a time. Gardot turned to music therapy at the advice of her doctor. A self-produced EP would soon follow, as would a record label bidding war.

You learned piano as a child, but you taught yourself guitar as an adult. Do you write differently on the two instruments?

Well, it's funny because every instrument implies something different. Being a piano player first, my comfort is rooted in the piano. So when I go to the guitar, I write in a different way. And that's nice, because it's almost like I'm *free*. Now that I understand the guitar, I go back to the piano and play it with a different sound, not just in a formulaic way. So it's kind of a complimentary thing. You know, they say that if you learn piano first, you can pick up any instrument in the world.

So, you'll be picking up other new instruments soon, then?

Oh, I actually am already. I'm learning the Portuguese guitar, and I've started drumming.

You're one of the few neo-jazz singer-songwriters whose main material is original. Was that intentional?

Yeah. I think that because of the *way* I came into music, the writing was just as important as the nature of creating sound. The only way I feel comfortable taking on a cover song, even now, is if it strikes a chord in me. I think artists who do covers have to be really careful because normally, when a song has been done, it's been done and buried, you know? If you look at any of the Rolling Stones' songs, there's no need to touch them. Frank Sinatra tunes are the same way. So when you have people doing them again and again, and they don't do anything with them that's fresh or new or personal, it ends up being kind of everything I can't stand about the world—the idea that everybody embraces mediocrity.

On your new album, you do a cover of "Over the Rainbow" that's certainly fresh and unexpected. How did it come about?

That was weird for me, because I felt like that song began and ended with Judy Garland, so to do it almost seemed unnecessary. But it wasn't as much about wanting to take on that song, as it was about accidentally *finding* that song while I was trying to write, and just surrendering to the fact that it was there. Because that song was such a huge part of my past, with my grandmother always playing the movie *The Wizard of Oz* for me, it was almost as if my grandmother was saying "You should play this music." So it was more of a spiritual thing than a musical one. It's funny—picking out a cover can be *harder* than writing a song.

Your piano playing is confident and assured, and the way you sing around it is incredibly conversational. Who influenced the way you accompany yourself at the piano?

When I first started, my biggest concern was just trying to get seated at the piano without pain. I had limitations in terms of what I could do or remember. I remember hearing so much, but wanting to leave space for the orchestra. Like in the beginning of "My One and Only Thrill," you hear this figure [*sings the rhythmic intro*], which to me is like the pulsations of a clock. In fact, I even wanted it to be played on tympanies, but we had a string section, not a full orchestra. I've always believed that the simplest things are really nice. Some of my favorite artists are people like Chet Baker, João Gilberto, and Antonio Carlos Jobim. I think of the little piano lines that they played, and they're really simple, but beautiful.

I hear a lot of Jobim in your piano touch. . . .

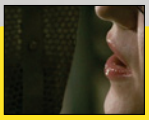
I love that. My favorites are Debussy, Chopin, Jobim, and Duke Ellington. And Erroll Garner. He kills me.

Do you have a favorite piano to play on the road?

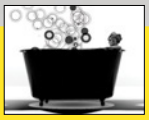
Steinway. As long as it's old, and it has nice attitude. It's hard to name a brand, because every piano is different. It's like a gentleman—you can't just like a guy because he's wearing a suit! But Steinway is my choice, especially the ones from right around the 1900s. There are so many colors in those pianos, and they have ivory keys. I love the ones that are actually short a couple of keys, because it was before they added them on. [*Early Steinways and other grand pianos had 85 notes, as compared to the modern 88-note standard. —Ed.*]

What music are you listening to these days?

I'm listening to [guitarist and songwriter] Arto Lindsay. I think he's incredibly amazing and bizarre. His song "Complicity" is really atonal and interesting. I also just went to Morocco and fell in love with the music there—the music of Africa just kills me. Also, Youssou N'Dour and Jacques Brel. I think Brel is absolutely unbelievable. I love listening to Juliette Greco, and Bud Powell, and Brazilian music. I also think opera and classical are the most highly respected forms of music in this day and age because *you can't mess up!* The thing about jazz that's cool is, if you make a mistake and you play it twice, all of a sudden you just created a new idea! k



CBS News video about Melody's accident and recovery.



Melody's site with tour dates, merch, and more.

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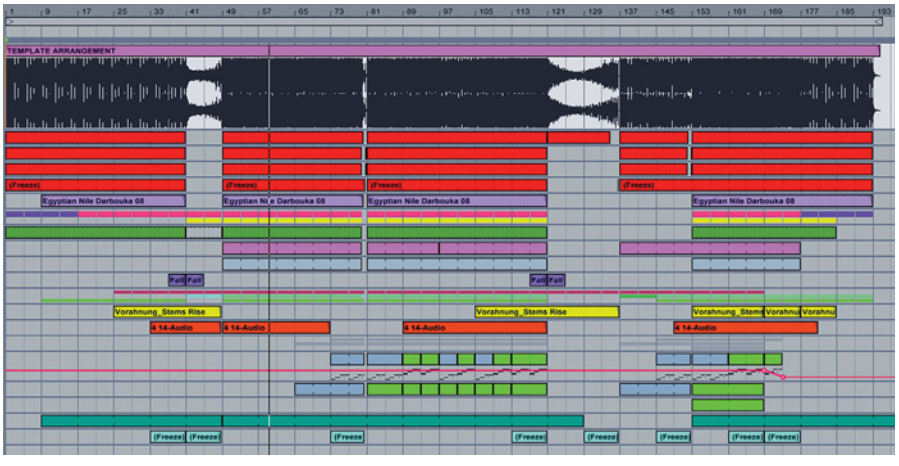
Dance

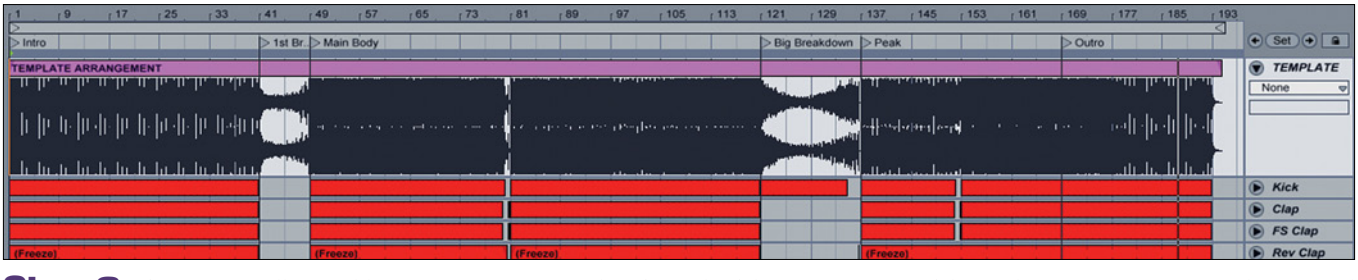
STEAL THIS ARRANGEMENT

When I get demos from aspiring producers, one of the most common mistakes I hear is an awkward or lifeless arrangement. The beats, groove, and music may be slammin', but if the "story" told by a well-crafted progression of sections isn't there, all the slick production in the world won't save the track. Fortunately, arrangements can't be copyrighted. Otherwise, the formula for all pop songs might well belong to the Beatles or Quincy Jones. So this month, we'll tackle a trick for copping the arrangement from your favorite dance remixes, without touching the music itself. Ready? Francis Preve

Step 1. Listen closely to your composition, comparing it to recent bona fide hits in your music collection. Then, pick the hit that most closely resembles the vibe you're after. This will be your arrangement guide.



Step 2. Next, create a new audio track at the top of your arrangement window. Import your guide tune into that audio track—in the picture, it's the purple region named "template arrangement." From there, align and time-stretch (or time-compress) the track so that the tempo and start of the guide track are locked with your own composition.



Step 3. If your DAW allows, add cue points to your timeline for each of the main sections of the guide remix arrangement. The essential arrangement sections are: intro, first breakdown, main body, big breakdown, peak, and outro. Of course, you can add more cue points for bass in, bass out, and various little fills if you like.

Audio examples by author Francis Preve.

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Step 4. You're ready to arrange! Mute the guide track and build each of your sections based on your cue points. If you get lost, switch back to the guide and analyze what's going on. Don't be afraid to create similar whooshes or drum fills to reinforce the vibe. Just make sure you're snagging *only* the "architecture" and not the music itself.

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Steal This Sound

THOMAS DOLBY's "CLOUDBURST AT SHINGLE STREET"

If you're a regular "Steal This Sound" reader, you know that we've covered Mr. Dolby's imaginative synth programming before—there's lots of great stuff there! This month, we'll break down the beautiful chord pulses of "Cloudburst at Shingle Street" from his first full-length album, *The Golden Age of Wireless*. We'll use Native Instruments Massive, but other synths will work as long they include some "digital-sounding" single-cycle waves. Mitchell Sigman

Step 1. Start with two oscillators an octave apart and detune them about 15 cents for chorusing. I used the "Additiv 1" wave for both oscillators to replicate the original track's PPG digital synth. Set both oscillators at equal volume.

Step 2. Using a lowpass filter, set the cutoff frequency at about 50%, then route an envelope to control the cutoff. Do this in Massive by dragging the "1Env" icon to one of the empty squares beneath the Cutoff knob. Set the modulation amount by command-clicking then dragging—you'll see a blue band around the Cutoff knob's circumference. Drag this band so it spans from 12 o'clock to about three o'clock. Turn the resonance up to around 20%.

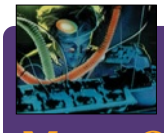
Step 3. Click the icon for envelope 1 ("1Env"), used to control filter cutoff frequency. Set attack to zero, decay and level at 50%, and release at 60%.

Step 4. Click the icon for envelope 4 ("4Env"), used to control amplitude. Set attack to zero, decay and level at 40%, and release at 50%.

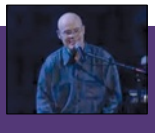
Step 5. Add effects. I used a fair amount of Massive's "Chorus Ensemble" followed by "Delay Synced." Set the delay very wet, with a lot of feedback—about a dozen audible repeats. Delay time should be eighth-notes at about 143 bpm (around 210ms).

Step 6. Add a channel strip EQ in your DAW. This may or may not be needed, but Massive's "Additiv 1" oscillator wave needed more piano-like resonance, so I boosted 5dB at 164Hz, and brightened it with a high shelf of 10dB at 3,750Hz.

That should get you pretty close. Try different single-cycle digital waves for different tones—that and the long, pulsing delay will inspire your own tunes in no time!



Full audio examples for this tutorial.



Video: Dolby performs his new song "Love Is a Loaded Pistol."

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Can a music program create professional, real-sounding arrangements and solos for your songs from only a chord progression?

"Are you sure it is legal to have this much fun?" "I'm looking for those **perfect band mates** and I just discovered they live in a box." "The soloist sounds amazingly like **real people** improvising!" "The program **sounds so much better** with **RealTracks**… A thousand times, Thank You!" "Band-in-a-Box is some of the **most fun** you can have with a computer." "I can load my **MP3** in and see the chords play on the screen." "My buddy and I sat around last Sunday night just jammin' away…" "As an old BE-BOPPER circa late 40s, most of the cats I played with are dead and gone." "Band-in-a-Box has made me a **much better player.**" "Can't say enough good about your products. You obviously understand our needs exactly." "BB makes it so easy to quickly build an arrangement for composing." "Thanks to BB I can still swing with the help of the **fabulous cats** living inside BB." "Band-in-a-Box was the solution to an old fustration: being a musician. Now I am a musician." "The ease and quickness in producing **quality** backing tracks is **unparalleled.**" "**RealTracks** is by far the easiest way to make **high-quality** background tracks." "**Band-in-a-Box** is the **holy grail** for accompaniment software." "This is so much fun." "I'm speechless." "Who says you can't buy happiness." "This is absolutely a must-have item." "I will be telling my **Mac friends** to get it." "**Band-in-a-Box** is a truly **awesome** product." "**Band-in-a-Box** is now on a whole other level of sophistication." "A giant leap forward" "Keep the **RealTracks** coming!" "It blows my mind." "**RealTracks** add a whole new dimension of realism." "I was absolutely **blown away** at the quality of **Band-in-a-Box**." "Your **Band-in-a-Box** program is **extraordinary!**" "Your product is **AWESOME!** **THANKS"** "A fantastic leap forward." "Un. Believable" "I can't believe how fast I can generate **RealTracks** and renders with the new version." "They've **outdone themselves** this time, and I'll be singing the praises of **Band-in-a-Box** every chance I get." "This new musical concept you have created is nothing short of evolutionary. If it were a living creature, it would be a whole new species." "Just when you think **Band-in-a-Box** is as cools as it can be, you guys take it to a new level." **"Brilliant!"** "I'm awestruck." "All of the new instruments are just **smashing.**" "I must say, the pedal steel is perhaps the greatest accomplishment in the history of this brilliant program." "The RealTracks are **fantastic** and provide **great inspiration** for creativity." "This is a great gift to jazz musicians, educators, and singers." "Oh, wow. **This changes everything.**" "It's **stunning.**" "Thanks for a superbly useful piece of software." "I tried with many audio files and the chord detection is **amazingly accurate!**" "This is absolutely a must-have item." "Wow, I'm learning tunes fast with help of your Audio Chord Wizard." "It finds the exact chords to the song… perfectly." "Wow!" **"I am blown away!** The jazz/swing RealTracks stuff is amazing." **"Awesome."** "Is this cool or what?" "I'm in seventh heaven" "You won't regret it (and if you do, there's the **30 day money back guarantee**)." "I never thought I'd see the day this was possible." "I know it's been said before, but you guys are **incredible**." "This is **gonna set the world on fire!**" "I'm so stoked about how good everything sounds I can hardly stand it." "This is just killer." "Amazing, simply amazing." "[RealDrums] is really awesome sounding. Good work!" "Many kudos all around." "You never cease to **amaze** me. You got it." **"Wow and Double Wow."** "The **RealTracks** and **RealDrums** sound awesome." "Long live PG Music!" "Mind bending." "I am frankly amazed at most of the styles." "I am absolutely delighted with this new BIAB 2009 for Mac. ***Kudos*** to you and your team!" "First time I did a song with **Band-in-a-Box**, **I couldn't believe it!**" "I use it in the classroom and also in creating music in my studio. It is a fantastic piece of music software to own. I am greatly impressed." "I use **Band-in-a-Box** regularly. It has improved my musical talents by far and I enjoy it very much. Thanks to all who have helped make this program so **fantastic!!!**" "I am very impressed with your fantasic ***improvisational*** program." "It's a great ***educational tool***." "This is the most powerful, cost effective, user friendly music software I have seen." "BIAB is my best **learning tool.**" "J'ai la premiere version de **Band-in-a-Box** et ***j'aime beaucoup.***" "A truly **great product!**" "It's just incredible! I am a practicing jazz musician and was **absolutely dazzled** by your soloist feature." "Band-in-a-Box is an **awesome** tool for getting projects done NOW!" "The soloist feature is **phenomenal!**" "Excellent quality is a PG Music standard." "I use your program with my saxophone students. They love to play with a "real" band in the back!" "Who knew what Coltrane would sound like soloing over country music—**LOVE IT!!!**" **"Awesome software at a fantastic price!" "Band-in-a-Box, well, it's just a great program!"**

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Producers' Roundtable

PERCOLATING PERCUSSION

This month, we'll focus on a key element of groove: percussion. As we collected answers from our expert panel, we discovered a unifying theme: Even if you're a seasoned vet with your own sample libraries like Boom Jinx, it's now culturally credible in the dance music world to use pre-made loops. Francis Preve

Alan Wilder

(Recoil, Depeche Mode | recoil.co.uk)

Sample libraries are often a good starting point, and as I've said before in this column, electronic-style percussion on top of human-feel grooves works well for me. Percussion samples often rely on time-stretching for optimization of the feel and creation of otherworldly effects. I also like the digital grit of pitch-shifting percussion sounds a long way from their original pitch—very slow tambourines, for example.

SHERVIN LANIEZ

Dan Kurtz

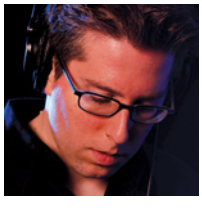
(Dragonette | dragonette.com)

The hallway of our house makes for great live percussion recording. I learned from my friend Dan Grech that close-miking percussion generally sucks in comparison to getting some live room feel into tracks that almost never have "real" room sounds in them anymore. We use our Telefunken U47 mic and compress it hard through our [Empirical Labs] Distressor. Most of the time, percussion is more about vibe and feel than sound, anyway. Beyond getting a good performance—whether from real instruments or playing samples—I think that quantizing percussion too tightly is the wrong way to go. Slightly out-of-time tambourines and shakers add great vibe.

James Cayzer

(Jaytech | jaytechmusic.com)

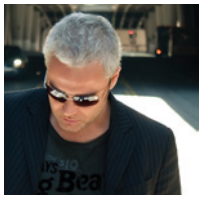
My usual trick is to sequence my own drum track from scratch using one-shot hits—Zenhiser samples [zenhiser.com] are usually pretty good—then layer my own creation with a pre-made drum loop to create a more authentic feel and fill things out. Done in this way, sufficient edits can usually be performed just on the pre-made loop to change things up. This saves having to screw around too much with my own "drum kit."



Josh Harris

(myspace.com/seirenproductions)

Recently, I've been using Native Instruments Maschine for a lot of my drum programming. It's a bit faster for me than using my Akai MPC, and I feel able to get my ideas down in a more seamless fashion. I usually wait to apply any heavy effects until I've printed my drums in Logic or Pro Tools, but once in awhile, I'll use effects in Maschine for something specific, then just print it.



Boom Jinx

(boomjinx.com)

Pick your own kicks, snares, claps, hi-hats, and key percussion sounds, and never be afraid to layer these ingredients with pre-made loops. To assault the loop's identity without taking away its function, have the kick sidechain the heck out of it, or give two layered, compatible loops the same sidechain treatment. Always kill the low end in loops, probably as far up as 200 to 400Hz depending on content. There was a time when using drum loops was considered low-class, but most experienced producers *do* use loops even though they have the ability to make the loops they're using themselves. I don't see the point of being an elitist snob about making my own loops. I've done two drum loop libraries and it took me a very long time to get them done. So, why should an experienced producer look down on a beginner who uses loops? The only caveat is that it's counter-productive to let a loop determine your *entire* groove, hence my advice to play in key elements such as kick and snare.

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AMP UP PART 1

Four Combo Amps Take the Stage

Unless you play acoustic piano live, your amp is the only part of your rig your ears *hear*. Plus, where a guitar or bass amp only has to make guitar or bass sound good, keyboards amps need to flatter any sound you dial up. Of course, you also need to hear yourself, and in smaller venues or ones where the P.A. is puny, project your sound to the audience as well.

Something is a combo amp if it incorporates speakers, power amp, multiple inputs, and mixer in one enclosure, and this month, we've gig-tested what we think are the four best going. We haven't forgotten that many of you use one or two powered monitor wedges plus a mixer as your keyboard amp, so we're rounding up the usual (and not-so-usual) suspects in that category in next month's issue.

BARBETTA

SE-53C

The Loudness Leader

by Brian Ho

Boutique brand Barbetta has been off the radar for awhile, but it's back with new combo amps built entirely around MOSFET signal paths, a design the company claims yields superior loudness, punch, and clarity at a given wattage. After testing the flagship of this line, the SE-53c, we tend to agree.

The simple rectangular shape houses forward-facing speakers; all connections and controls are on the back, which is a bit inconvenient for adjusting your levels on the fly, though it does protect them from accidental movement. Though there's a handle on top, we'd prefer two handles (one on either side) for easier carrying.

I first used this amp as the sole P.A. for a short corporate party gig. The band included one singer, a guitarist, a drummer, and myself. I was playing a Hammond clone with pedal bass, with a synth on top for electric pianos, Clav, and other sounds. That rainy night, the last thing we wanted was to bring a full P.A. with mains, mixer, and monitors. The Barbetta shined in this situation. We placed the amp in the middle of the stage, ran multiple keyboards into its 1/4" inputs, and the singer into its XLR mic input.

Everybody in our band had no trouble hearing each other, and the audience heard us loud and clear. Given that this is just one point-source of sound, we were surprised at how clearly we projected throughout the venue. At one point, the two owners of the client company sat in on guitar—that's right, three guitars total. We played some grooving funk, a blues, and an indulgent Jimi Hendrix cover. As my left hand and feet covered bass and my right hand played organ lines, a wah Clav, and even some string pads, the Barbetta had no trouble hanging with the guitarists or drummer, even though it was barely at half volume.

	BARBETTA SE-53C	**BOSE L1 COMPACT**	**MOTION SOUND KP-500SN**	**ROLAND KC-880**
Mono or Stereo?	Mono.	Mono.	Stereo.	Stereo.
PROS	Loudest of the bunch. Stays clean at extreme volume.	Most portable. Hi-fi, unhyped sound. Can sit behind a mic line without feedback.	Best stereo imaging. Expandable. Plenty loud. Boutique build quality and components.	Most flexible input panel and onboard mixing. Ground lift on XLR outputs. Built-in effects.
CONS	Mono inputs and audio pass-through only.	Less suited to loud rock bands. Bare-bones input panel.	On the pricey side. Direct outs could use ground lift.	Bulky and heavy.
Bass drivers	2 x 12".	1 x 8".	2 x 12".	2 x 12".
Treble drivers	2 in vertical array.	6 x 2".	4 x 3.5" ferrofluid-cooled horns.	2 x 2" piezo.
Output power	650W.	130W.	500W (250W/side).	320W (160W/side).
Input channels	5 1/4" unbal. mono, XLR mic in , 1/4" aux (does not go to line outputs), 1/4" effects loop return.	Ch.1: XLR mic in, Ch. 2: 1/4" bal./unbal. line/guitar, RCA L/R, 1/8" TRS mini.	2 stereo 1/4" unbal., XLR mic on ch. 2.	4 stereo 1/4" unbal., XLR mic on ch. 1. Aux: stereo 1/4", RCA, or 1/8" to separate channel. 1/4" stereo link in.
Line outputs	XLR and 1/4" bal. TRS mono, 1/4" effects loop send.	1/4" mono bal./unbal., RCA L/R. Both RCA jacks carry mono sum.	Stereo XLR bal., 1/4" mono unbal. for powered subwoofer, 5-pin DIN connector for SL-500SN slave amp.	Stereo XLR bal., stereo 1/4" unbal., 1/4" stereo link L/R out.
Headphone outputs	None.	None.	None.	Stereo 1/4".
Equalizer	3-band.	Ch. 1: 2-band. Ch. 2: ToneMatch preset for acoustic guitar.	3-band per channel plus 50Hz boost/cut.	3-band.
Effects	None.	None.	Stereo expander per channel.	Reverb, chorus, tremolo, and rotary w/ switchable slow/fast.
Dimensions (W x H x D)	20.2" x 21.5" x 16.2".	13.25" x 78.5"* x 16.75".	24.5" x 18.75" x 16.75".	29" x 21" x 17.6".
Weight	52 lbs.	29.2 lbs.	48 lbs.	97 lbs.
List price	$1,299	$999	$1,695	$1,393.50
Approx. street price	TBD	$900	$1,300	$1,000
Website	barbetta.com	bose.com	motion-sound.com	rolandus.com

*In extended position. Height in collapsed position is 16.5".

Barbetta's no-nonsense rear panel sports five mono keyboard inputs, a mic input, and a "post line" input that goes to the internal amp but not the line outs on the far right. That makes it ideal for a click track or monitor mix from the house.

On another night, I accompanied a group of singers on a digital stage piano. I was pleased by the amp's reproduction of piano sounds; for the most part, it was natural and uncolored throughout the full frequency range. The dual woofers, however, were almost too much for this situation, so the onboard EQ came in handy for softening the lows. If most of your gigs involve watching your volume in intimate settings, the smaller SE-41c or SE-31c will put out all the sound you need and be more portable in the bargain.

There are two things we'd like to see for the price. First, some amps have stereo inputs and line outs even though they're mono "in the box." But the Barbetta is mono only, so you'll need a compact mixer if you want to pass stereo to a house P.A. Second, a ground lift switch on the XLR out would be useful for killing the hum that's endemic to many bars and clubs.

Any buying decision involves trade-offs, though and what you get instead of stereo is an amp that gets a lot louder, and stays a lot cleaner under stress, than any single-box solution we've tried. Other amps in this roundup may be loud enough or more than loud enough, but the SE-53c is in another category—let's call it "OMG!"

BOSE

L1 COMPACT

Hi-Fi Sound, Maximum Portability

by Tom Brislin

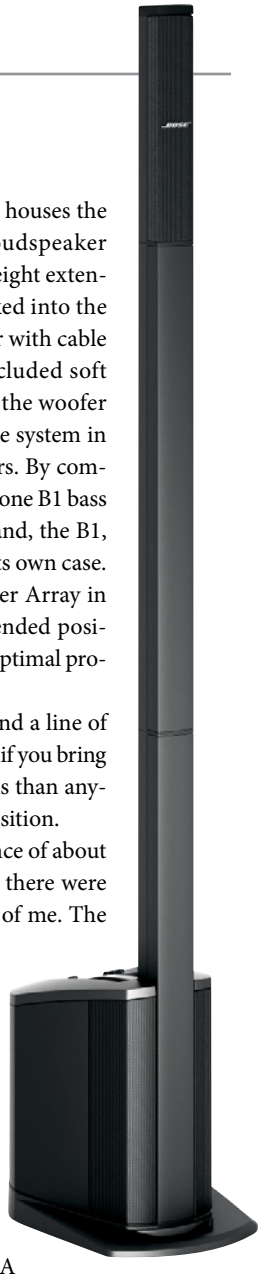
Who doesn't want a system that projects balanced sound throughout the room, that can be your monitor and your house speaker, and that you can easily carry? At $999, the L1 Compact (L1C for short) brings Bose's "personal line array" design closer to reality for the gigging musician. The system consists of four pieces: the Power Stand houses the inputs, mixer, amplifier, and woofer; the Loudspeaker Array houses six speakers; and there are two height extension bars. The Loudspeaker Array travels locked into the Power Stand (which has a handle and slipcover with cable pouch), and the extension bars fit into an included soft case with a shoulder strap. Because Bose built the woofer into the Power Stand, you can carry the whole system in one trip and still have a free hand to open doors. By comparison, an L1 Model II (reviewed Feb. '08) with one B1 bass unit involves four items to carry: the Power Stand, the B1, and two halves of the speaker column, each in its own case.

The L1 Compact is geared for the singer-songwriter with one mic and one instrument. Multi-keyboard players will need a compact mixer to enjoy its clean, clear sound.

Using the Power Stand with the Loudspeaker Array in it is what Bose calls collapsed position. In extended position, adding the height extension bars achieves optimal projection for larger audiences.

The L1C has the unique capacity to sit behind a line of microphones. Though any speaker will feed back if you bring a mic too close, the L1C is more resistant to this than anything else we've tried, especially in extended position.

My first test was a solo café gig for an audience of about 40. The "stage" was to the side of the room, so there were listeners to one side as well as directly in front of me. The L1C definitely has the balanced sound dispersion Bose has been touting. I could hear everything at a comfortable level, and several listeners I spoke to afterward said everything was clear as a bell. I was pleased with the overall tone on piano sounds, and the bass response even hung with some low-end Moog patches I put through it. Overall, I love this system for its portability, flexibility, and tone. My only real gripe is that the RCA and 1/8" inputs sum the incoming signal to mono—if you use the RCA



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Salo Loyo
Luis Miguel, No-Pals

"Until I heard my acoustic piano samples through K Series I thought they were kind of uninspiring sounding. Now I'm hearing what they really sound like and loving it. Really natural and clear. Way better sounding to me than in-ear monitors."

Wayne Linsey
Tonight Show Band 2010, American Idol Band, Jennifer Hudson, Maze

"I first heard K Series when I shared the American Idol stage with Hall & Oats and recommended them the next day to the Tonight Show. Now I get to listen to my keys through K10's five days a week."

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outs marked "record," you're getting the same signal from each side.

In rock bands with caveman drummers and shred guitarists, the L1C was not the strongest performer for sheer loudness. Editor Stephen Fortner notes, "The larger L1 Model II with two B1 subs will stand up to any stageful of knuckleheads and still project." For more civilized gigs, though, the L1C has an unhyped, almost audiophile quality—particularly on acoustic piano sounds—that nothing else quite touches.

Carry or play through the L1 Compact in collapsed position (shown), or add the included extenders and park the speakers on top. All the connections are internal.

MOTION SOUND

KP-500SN

The Stereo Specialist

by Jack Ortolani

For quite a few years, I've been searching for a compact live performance amp setup that gives me the same warm, full, articulate and dynamic sound I get from my high-end component system, which consists of a rackmount mixer, a big power amp, and a terrific pair of two-way speakers with 12" woofers. I've auditioned countless keyboard combo amps and most sound just fine at low volumes.

To my ears, they all fall short when you really dig in and play aggressively with a good band, regardless of the style of music. To me, this is the ultimate test for any keyboard amp, and finally, my search is over, because the KP-500SN passes this test with flying colors. I bought one a few months after trying it at the 2009 Winter NAMM Show, after which I finally retired my old rig and never looked back.

For starters, the amp is extremely lightweight considering all that's inside. The finish is a nearly indestructible polymer coating. The KP-500SN is a stereo-from-one-box amp, and the speaker placement on either side of its V-shaped cabinet creates a terrific stereo image. All the magic and motion of your stereo sounds is there to inspire your performance. Spatial effects such as Leslie simulation, chorus, and panning really grab your ears. Its unique spatial expander function, which you can control separately for the two stereo input channels, widens the image even more, and is particularly effective on Leslie simulations. Turning it up too much on certain sounds (acoustic piano, for example) can cause the "hole in the middle" effect, so use your ears and season to taste.

The KP-500SN is intended to sit three or four feet from you, at ear level. The sound is very intimate, like being in the middle of a huge set of headphones, yet it projects well. Other musicians never have a problem hearing me comfortably onstage, and at low-key gigs, it covers a small room quite nicely without a P.A.

Every type of keyboard patch you can think of sounds great through the KP-500SN—and I've tried them all during the past 18 months. There's plenty of power to handle transients without distortion when you dig into spiky sounds such as pianos or horns, and the signal from the direct outputs is virtually noiseless. There is also a subwoofer out if you want extended bass.

I do have a small wish list. First, though two stereo channels is enough for many "top keyboard, bottom keyboard" gig rigs, some players do need more. Second, a ground lift switch for the direct outs.

If you need more volume still—say, for a festival stage with a loud band—you can add the SL-500SN, essentially a KP-500SN without the mixer. I've used this stack at concerts, and it sounds incredible. A five-pin DIN cable connects the two, so be aware that those *aren't* MIDI ports on the amps!

The KP-500SN is hardly inexpensive, but my keyboards always sound great and my setup couldn't be simpler. It's also made in the U.S.A., and the fit, finish, and build quality compared to most big music-store brands is something I appreciate every time I use it.

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ROLAND

KC-880

The Problem Solver

by Tony Orant

As we look for all-in-one amplification to handle our stage pianos, organs, and synths, Roland has come up with a high-powered stereo solution, the KC-880. My use of this amp at various gigs says that you'll be heard, even above a raging guitarist and bombastic drummer. A myriad of inputs accommodates most keyboardists' rigs, and aux ins let you monitor other sources.

"Keyboardists at bar gigs often get left without a monitor wedge," noted editor Stephen Fortner, "and since our instruments plug into AC, we're the most likely to get ground buzz if we connect to the house P.A. Disengaging the KC-880's aux in from its line outs lets you take a monitor send from the house, solving the first problem. The onboard ground lift means you don't need direct boxes to solve the second. Roland seems to get what we're up against."

The KC-880's rotary (Leslie) simulator is fairly realistic, has a separate slow/fast button, and seems based on the Boss RT-20. While you wouldn't disable your modern organ clone's internal sim in favor of this, older clonewheels may benefit. The fairly utilitarian reverb is nice for keyboards that don't have it onboard, *e.g.* the Nord Electro 2, Minimoog Voyager, and almost anything vintage. All four channels share one effect at the same time, but you can bypass the effect per channel, or altogether via a footswitch—which can also change rotary speeds.

The KC880 employs a single knob for effect selection and depth: Each of four effects (reverb, chorus, tremolo, and rotary) gets 90 degrees of travel; turning the knob clockwise within an effect's quadrant increases its intensity.

Aux inputs in 1/4", RCA, and 1/8" stereo mini sizes let you plug in anything from an iPod to a fifth keyboard. The buzz-afflicted will cheer for the ground lift on the XLR outs.

Those familiar with Roland's KC series will feel right at home, as there's a volume knob for each channel, three-band master EQ, and Stereo Link connections that let you run two KC amps as a stereo system but plug your keyboards into the one closest to you. However, the KC-880 is stereo itself—effectively two amps in one box.

As someone who has struggled with the "Do I run in mono or stereo?" issue forever, I find that by its very nature, it's difficult to get true stereo presentation out of a single enclosure. That said, the stereo imaging is impressive on section strings, electric pianos with panning tremolo, and synth patches that make dramatic use of panning. Overall, the KC-880's sound is in line with other KC amps—there's just more of it. Organ emulations and thickly-textured synths benefit more from this than complex pianos and brass do, but with the KC-880's substantial power, keyboards will project to the back of the room even when P.A. reinforcement is not an option.

Bottom line: The KC-880 tackles a lot of problems for which we'd otherwise use multiple items such as stereo cabinets, a mixer, direct boxes, and even external effects. That you're neither carrying those nor cabling them together makes up for most of the KC's 97-pound bulk; the included casters help with the rest. k

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Kurzweil

PC3K8

by Stephen Fortner

In my review of the original Kurzweil PC3 in December 2008, I praised its huge selection of gig-ready sounds, incredibly deep synthesis engine, and seamless melding of sample-based, virtual analog, and clonewheel (virtual B-3 organ) sound-making in one instrument. We awarded it a Key Buy.

Kurzweil devotees who wanted to replace their aging K series workstations or PC2 stage pianos had waited a long time for the PC3, which combined and updated elements of both. Where the PC2 upgraders were generally pleased as punch, the K series power users lamented the absence of two features: compatibility with sounds they'd spent years acquiring and tweaking for the K2000, K2500, and K2600, and a way to host the user samples on which many of those sounds were based.

Now, the PC3K aims specifically at those needs. Plus, its user sample memory is non-volatile flash, so any samples you've loaded will survive a power-off and not need to be reloaded. This review will focus on what's new and different about the PC3K. Since its factory sounds, synth engine, and sequencing features are otherwise the same as the PC3, you can read about them in the original review, which we've re-upped at keyboardmag.com/article/90823. I realize that begs the question, "C'mon, are the sounds as good two years later?" Um, yeah—as do-it-all gig keyboards, the PC3 and PC3K still rock.

Build and Action

Currently available in 88 weighted keys only (hence the "8" in the full model number), the PC3K changes the PC3's indigo finish to black, and the sideboards are of hardwood from Young Chang's piano factory. It's the classiest looking Kurzweil since the five-figure Audio Elite System of the mid-'90s.

The PC3 I reviewed in 2008 had the semi-weighted action. The fully weighted version in the PC3K (and PC3X) features matte-textured black

Specifications

PROS Excellent piano, vintage keys, synth, and orchestral sounds. Integrated analog and tonewheel modeling. Memory retains user samples with power off. Superb action. Broad compatibility with sound libraries created for K2000, K2500, and K2600.

CONS Backward compatibility has exceptions, such as old factory programs and third-party KB3 sounds. No audio inputs for processing external signals live.

PRICE **List:** $4,190
Approx. street: $3,500

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keys. Its marriage to percussive sounds like acoustic and electric piano is superb, and it really lets you bring out all the nuances that come from as many as 15 layers in some of the grand piano Programs and up to the full 32 layers in electric pianos. On synth sounds, the quick key return enabled some of the fastest leads I've ever managed on a weighted keyboard. Single-note "machine gun" trills (think Billy Joel's "Angry Young Man") required the key to recover almost fully between notes, so alternating index fingers from either hand worked better than the more organ-like technique of drumming two or three fingers of the same hand on the key's surface.

Loading Sounds

The PC3K supports class-compliant USB, meaning you don't need a driver. Connected to your Mac or PC, it becomes available to the OS and programs as a MIDI device. Hit the Storage button, select "USB PC connection," and the PC3K shows up on your desktop as a drive. However, this drive icon only mounts the PC3K's Program memory, not the sample memory. Therefore, you can only drag-and-drop Program and Setup files (K26, K25, and KRZ files are supported) onto it—dragging a sample file will almost certainly generate a "not enough space" message.

So how do you get samples into the PC3K? You load them—along with associated Programs and Setups—from a thumb drive plugged into the USB device port on the back. Select "USB device" after you've hit the Storage button, and the soft keys navigate and choose files. Though the PC3K should see any USB storage device, it won't power anything beefier than a thumb drive. My advice: Just get the stuff you want onto your computer, from there onto a thumb drive, then into the PC3K.

Kurzweil's website says the PC3K can play "most K series Programs and Setups," so I set out to find the limits. Any sound set loaded wholesale with its own sample data works great: Kurzweil sent me their *Take 6* vocal library (which sounds fresh even though the a cappella stars recorded it over ten years ago), and in minutes I was *shoo-bop*-ing my heart out on the keyboard. Custom Rhodes, Clavinet, and orchestral sounds for my K2000 that I'd pulled off old Iomega Zip disks? Check. Hits and patterns

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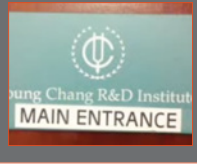
Read our original review of the PC3.



Editor Stephen Fortner tours Kurzweil's R&D lab.

In place of the PC3's xD memory card slot, the PC3K has a port for USB thumb drives, which are cheaper and far more commonly available.

I once sampled from TR-808 and MPC60 drum machines? Check. Anything in WAV or AIFF format? Check—subject to the 128MB memory limit, of course.

Programs that depended on K series factory ROM are a different matter, as the PC3K has different (and far better) ROM samples. One example: I tried both K2000 and K2500 versions of the well-known Pink Floyd "On the Run" Program by sound designer Daniel Fisher, and the PC3K got only the hi-hat part right. Kurzweil will add full compatibility in a planned ROM expansion, but this shouldn't be an issue for the majority of users. If you want to load legacy sounds, they're probably the high-end sort that came with their own samples.

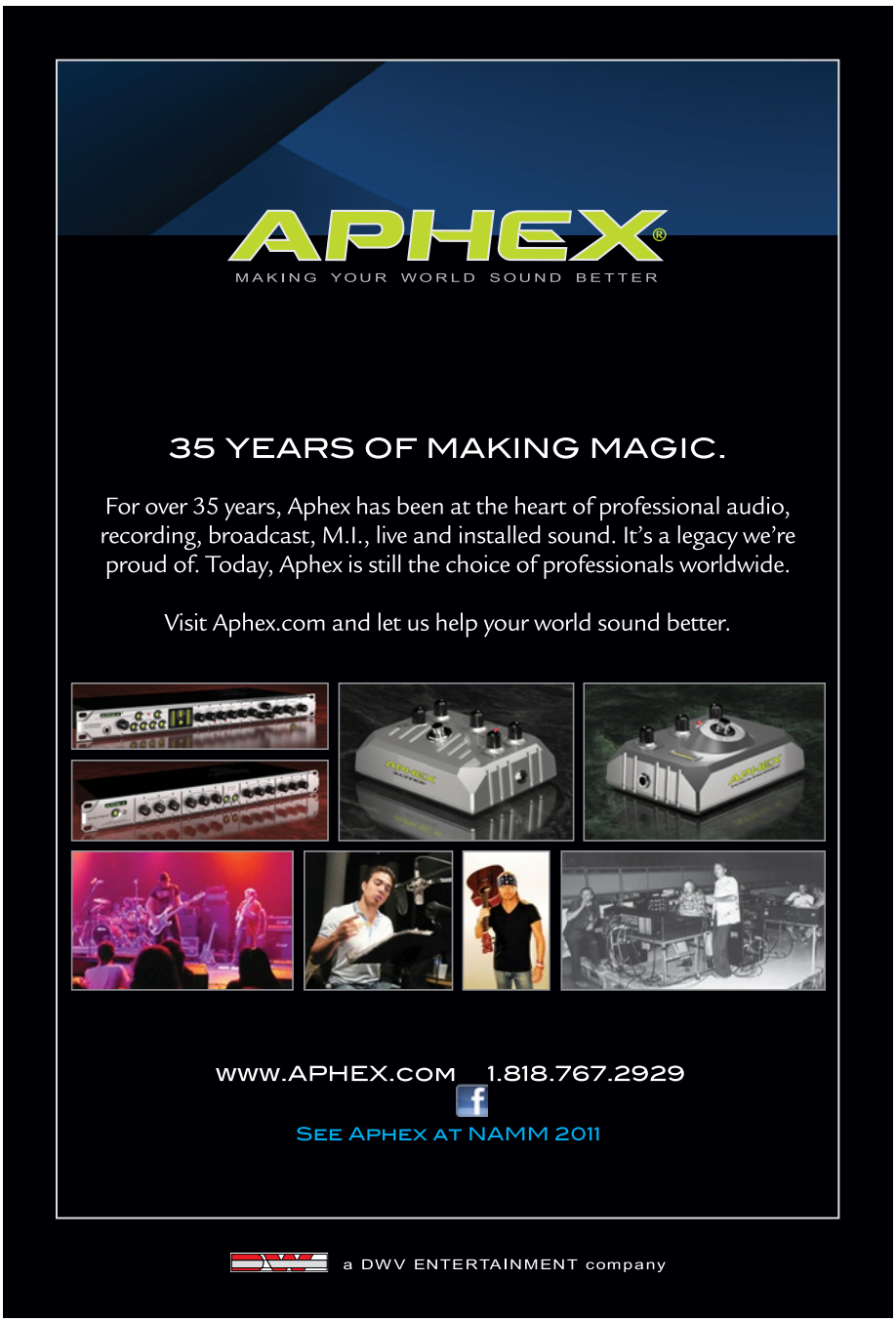
I then tried the KS-B3 sounds that developer Kevin Spargo (ksounds.com) designed for the K2600's KB3 organ mode. I figured that since the PC3K has KB3, they'd load without a hitch. They loaded, but as soon as I tried to play any of them, the PC3K went silent and only a factory reset or a power cycle got things back to normal. I alerted Kurzweil, and they confirmed that since the PC3 family's KB3 mode has more parameters and more advanced DSP modeling than that in the K series, old KB3 programs aren't compatible and confuse the heck out of the machine.

So, the PC3K's backward compatibility is broad but not perfect. Let's put this in perspective. I can't think of any other current synth that lets you load sounds from as far back as 15 years—with no re-sampling, no reconstructing of keymaps, and no reprogramming of synth parameters, no less.

Since the PC3K lacks audio inputs, it can't be a standalone sampler (though it does respectable sample editing) or a vocoder. To do stuff to audio, you have to load it as a sample. Once you do, it's fair game for processing using the PC3K's Variable Architecture Synthesis Technology, and that's powerful stuff. I've elaborated on VAST in other Kurzweil reviews, but for the uninitiated, even the earliest K2000 approximated a "virtual modular" synth comfortably before any soft synth developer had drawn their first graphical patch cable.

Conclusions

Who cares about playing old sounds on a new keyboard? For starters, pros who've put a lot of time and money into getting those sounds exactly right for a high-pressure gig, but who can't keep relying on aging hardware that lacks modern connectivity. That so many Kurzweil users fit that description speaks to how much the company got right the first time. If you don't need to load samples (for backward compatibility or any other reason), the PC3X offers the same factory sounds, weighted action, and all other features at a far lower price. If you do, though, the PC3K combines the best of what's old and what's new in the Kurzweil ecosystem. It lets you have your cake and eat it, too. k



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Mackie ONYX 820i

by Michael Gallant

For many musicians and engineers, the words "Mackie" and "mixer" are synonymous, and with good reason. For decades, the company has produced robust, no-nonsense mixing consoles of all shapes and sizes, serving countless garage bands, recording sessions, and stadium shows in the process. With the Onyx-i series, Mackie offers a compelling alchemy of digital and analog functionality, promising that the smallest box in their flagship series not only brings beef and flavor as a live mixer, but also as a FireWire audio interface for computer recording.

Construction and Connections

Right out of the box, I appreciated the Onyx 820i's compact form factor, which proved useful in the two separate and small project studio spaces. In the first, I easily set the mixer on top of my Mac Pro tower and tweaked knobs and buttons from there; in the second, it fit nicely on my desk.

Also impressive is the layout and accessibility of controls—the "Where's the button to do this?" factor is essentially nonexistent. My guest expert, producer and engineer Michael Winger (Tom Petty, Regina Spektor, Super

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Twin FireWire 400 ports, main outs, control room outs, and alternate outs are on the rear panel. Producing part of your album in Los Angeles and part in Australia? The internal power supply auto-switches throughout a range from 100 to 240 VAC.

Adventure Club), agreed that "the FireWire buttons, the software and interface elements, are all clearly labeled and easy to find."

The Onyx-820i boasts a respectable array of "gozintas" and "gozouttas." The eight channels consist of two mono channels that accommodate line or mic inputs (with or without phantom power), two stereo line inputs, and a hybrid channel that can handle another mono mic input (again, with or without phantom power) and stereo line inputs. If you're in iso-booth territory, the mixer has talkback—something I'm not used to seeing on a piece of hardware this compact.

Computer Integration

There comes a day when every recording keyboardist must face the question: "What do I use to unlock and record into Pro Tools?" Mackie fans can celebrate, as the Onyx 820i comes with a driver for Pro Tools M-Powered 8—at press time, this driver was free due to a special Mackie has run for several months. [*This is less of a big deal now that Pro Tools 9 works with virtually any CoreAudio or ASIO interface of your choice—see "New Gear" on page 18 for more info. —Ed.*] Installation was a breeze and within five minutes, I was opening sessions and comping vocals. I also used the mixer with Logic, Finale, GarageBand, and other programs with no difficulties.

On the FireWire integration side, the Onyx 820i gives you a lot of flexibility as to how to communicate with your DAW. Channels 1, 2, 3-4, and 5-6 let you choose whether pre- or post-fader-and-EQ signal goes out the FireWire port, for example. "It's also nice that you can assign the main mix to FireWire 7-8 and have things show up on your computer with the touch of a button, rather than having to route them around with cables," added Winger. "These are all good workflow enhancements."

In Use

For an album in progress, I used the Onyx to record organ and electric piano from a Roland V-Combo keyboard, heavy lead synth sounds from a Roland V-Synth, and backing vocals sung into a large-diaphragm, phantom-powered condenser mic. In all of these uses, the sound captured in my Logic and Pro Tools sessions came through crisp and true to the source, without significant coloring or affectation. Winger, who mixed the album, agreed, noting that "the preamps were clean and quiet without significant hiss, muck, or thinness."

The Onyx 820i also did a fine job at a house concert. My sound requirements were straightforward: stereo output to two speakers, with inputs coming from a dynamic vocal mic, mono electric bass (easy, thanks to the mixer's built-in DI on channels 1 and 2), and a digital stage piano running in stereo. I liked the feel, sound, and musicality of the Perkins EQ as I swept out some shrillness from the piano's upper range and boosted the low end of the bass to fit the sonics of the room.

My only noteworthy gripe about the Onyx 820i is that it lacks traditional MIDI ports. Since I do a lot of composition and recording work with virtual instruments, their absence was a drag. True, pretty much any keyboard you buy these days will have direct USB MIDI connection to your computer, so this is far from a dealbreaker—but for those of us who still prefer to use our beloved Kurzweil PC88s and other pre-USB axes as MIDI controllers, and conserve valuable USB and FireWire ports on our computers, a good ol' pair of five-pin MIDI jacks would've been a nice addition.

Conclusions

The Onyx 820i is a rugged and versatile mixer that will do many gigging and recording musicians proud, both in the club and in the studio. Keyboardists are used to routing our setups through a compact mixer for live gigs—we have to do it all the time. Therefore, it's very intuitive that the front end for the DAW in our keyboard-centric home studios should handle like an analog mixer—and since the Mackie *is* one, it does this brilliantly. If you need more inputs, larger siblings in the Onyx-i family offer the same crisp, clean sound and multitrack FireWire output. If you're looking for a transparent sounding, no-nonsense mixing and recording solution to take from studio to stage and back again, the Onyx 820i should be at the top of your list.

Specifications

PROS Works as an interface for Pro Tools M-Powered, or virtually any other DAW. Clean, crisp preamps. Lots of functionality in a small footprint. Versatile analog and FireWire routing. Robust construction.

CONS Doesn't function as a MIDI interface.

CONCEPT Analog mixer that thrives in a live setting—and as a FireWire audio interface for your favorite Mac or PC recording software.
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Native Instruments
SESSION STRINGS

by Francis Preve

It's almost a law that modern soft samplers come bundled with a selection of rich orchestral strings with various articulations. Legato, arco, and pizzicato are almost always represented, providing bombast and drama whether they're supporting pads or lending an air of professionalism to backing tracks of all shapes and sizes.

When full orchestras are a bit too much, the subtlety and intimacy of a smaller string section can really warm up a track without overwhelming it. What's more, if you're going for a classic soul or vintage pop feel, this type of string section can mean the difference between "nice try" and true authenticity.

With that in mind, Native Instruments' Session Strings library for Kontakt 4 and Kontakt Player is a perfect compliment to the larger orchestras that ship with most samplers. Consisting of four violins, three violas, two celli, and two double basses—all beautifully recorded in a variety of useful articulations in a relatively dry studio—this library is extremely well-suited to everything from delicate soundtrack work to rock, pop, soul, and even certain types of electronica.

The keymapping of the various string types is thoughtfully executed in each of the presets, and while the array of exotic articulations isn't quite as extensive as some of the more expensive collections, all of the essentials are in place. Legato, staccato, spiccato, pizzicato, and crescendos are represented, along with some really nice glissando articulations that help to avoid the dreaded "played on a keyboard" character that can plague even the most well thought out performances.

In addition to the ten standard performances and 14 single presets, there's an alternate collection of "MTown" (Motown) versions for each of the above patches. These alternate takes really nail that old-school sound with a secret concoction of EQ and light saturation processing that adds warmth and body in a way that's hard to put into words. Suffice to say, these versions sit really well in all kinds of mixes, regardless of their pop or soul pedigree.

Session Strings' Animator function deserves special mention, thanks to its intelligent approach to chord articulations and arpeggio options. There are six sub-types of the staccato, pizzicato, and spiccato options for both chords and arpeggios, and the Groove knob provides tempo synchronization for note values ranging from quarter-notes to sixteenth-note triplets. For dance music production, this feature alone can provide hours of creative bliss, since it takes the

The FX Panel provides tailored versions of basic EQ and reverb for quickly nailing the ideal string sound.

guesswork out of getting realistic articulations for rhythmic parts.

Rounding out the collection is an effects panel that includes custom tailoring of the minimum and maximum MIDI velocity settings (along with the overall velocity curve), three-band EQ, and integrated reverb presets that are nicely optimized for strings. In practice, these were quite handy, despite their simplicity. For all but the most complex mixes, they may even be all you need to get these strings to sit properly in a track.

All in all, I was really impressed with the Session Strings library. The presets cover a ton of useful ground with a minimum of head-scratching, and the Animator presets make the collection practically play itself. At $119, it's a Key Buy, and an affordable way to add a touch of class to your tracks, regardless of your preferred genre. k

Specifications

PROS Beautifully recorded small string section with a variety of articulation options. Motown versions really nail the old-school pop/soul vibe. Animator presets take the guesswork out of playing rhythmic chords and arpeggios with authority.

CONS Exotic articulations and solo versions of each instrument not represented.

FORMATS Mac and PC. AU, RTAS, VST, and standalone. Free Kontakt 4 Player included; requires Intel processor on Macs.

PRICE **List: $119**
Approx. street: $99

native-instruments.com

Original audio examples by the author.

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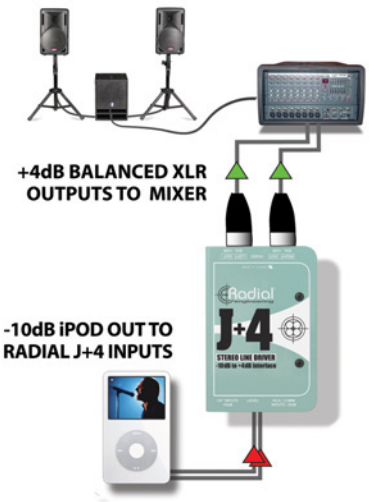

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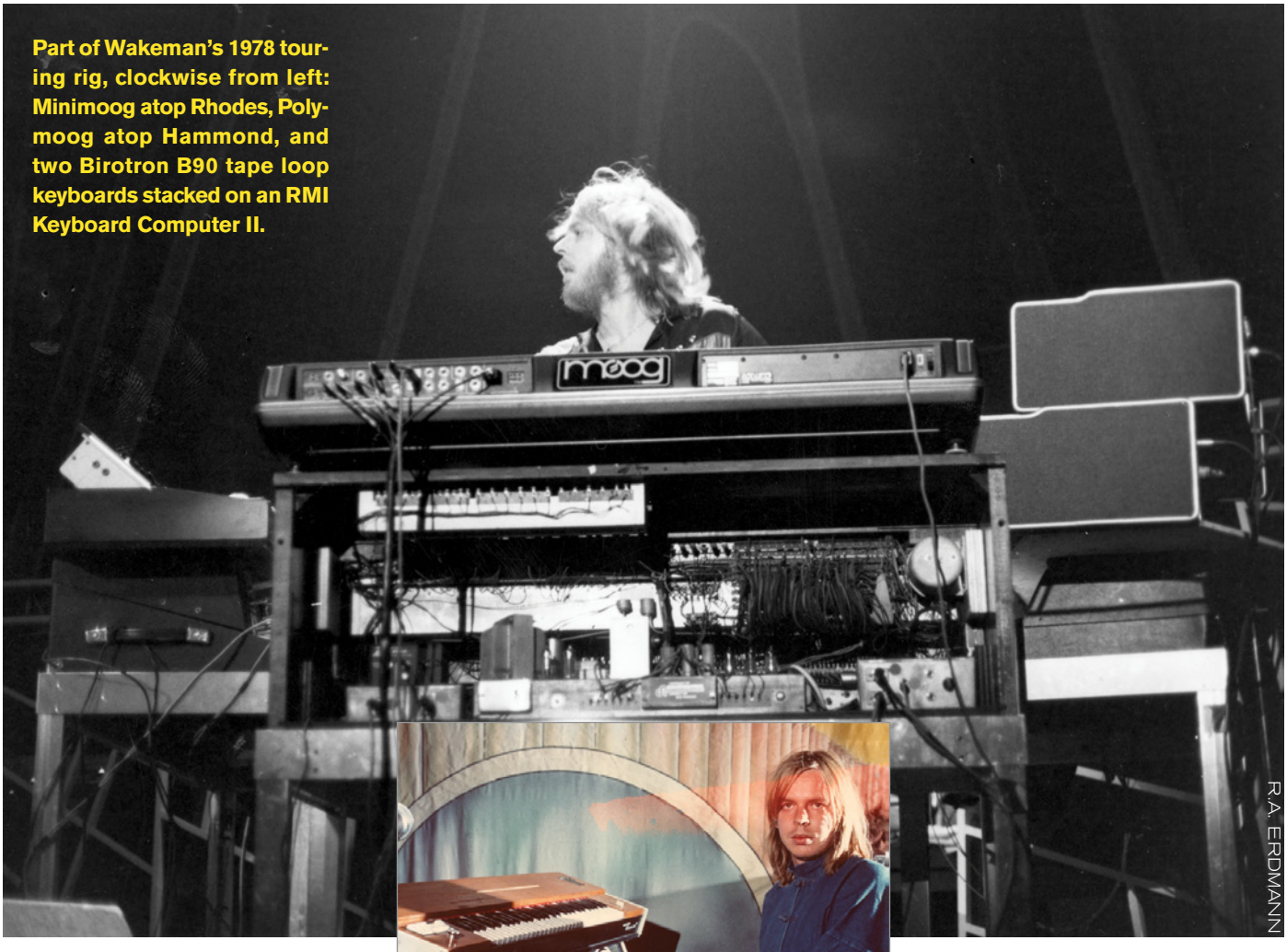

Part of Wakeman's 1978 touring rig, clockwise from left: Minimoog atop Rhodes, Polymoog atop Hammond, and two Birotron B90 tape loop keyboards stacked on an RMI Keyboard Computer II.

R.A. ERDMANN

JON SIEVERT

Rick Wakeman from our March/April 1976 cover shoot with (top to bottom) Hohner Clavinet D6, RMI Electra-Piano, and Hammond C-3. Foreground: Minimoog atop custom Mellotron.

Here's Rick Wakeman's idea of "seeing how little we can put onstage" for Yes' *Tormato* tour, from our February 1978 issue: "I only took the Hammond C-3, the Polymoog, the Sequential Circuits Prophet, two Birotrons, two Minimoogs, a Yamaha CP-30 electronic piano, an RMI Keyboard Computer, and a grand piano." Birotrons? Even seasoned spotters might recognize every keyboard in the above photo except for the two boxy black ones on the right, which Wakeman personally funded and evangelized.

"There's a new instrument coming out in 1976 that we helped [designer] Dave Biro develop," he explained in our March/April 1976 interview. "It's called the Birotron. It's really outrageous. It creates all the orchestra sounds; the choir and strings are really frightening. It uses 8-track tapes arranged in loops so there's no 8-second sustain limit like on the Mellotron. You can program different kinds of attack and sustain, and the keyboard is light—you can play as fast as you like, which you can't do on the Mellotron."

Wakeman had the admirable goals of selling the Birotron B90 for between $1,500 and $2,000, and of recording tons of tape libraries for it. Sadly, cost overruns and technical issues precluded commercial success. Current estimates put the number of Birotrons ever made between 12 and 35, and surviving units in the single digits. What might have revolutionized keyboard gigging in the '70s by being a lightweight, affordable "sampler" that played real sounds now stands as arguably the rarest electronic keyboard in the world. k

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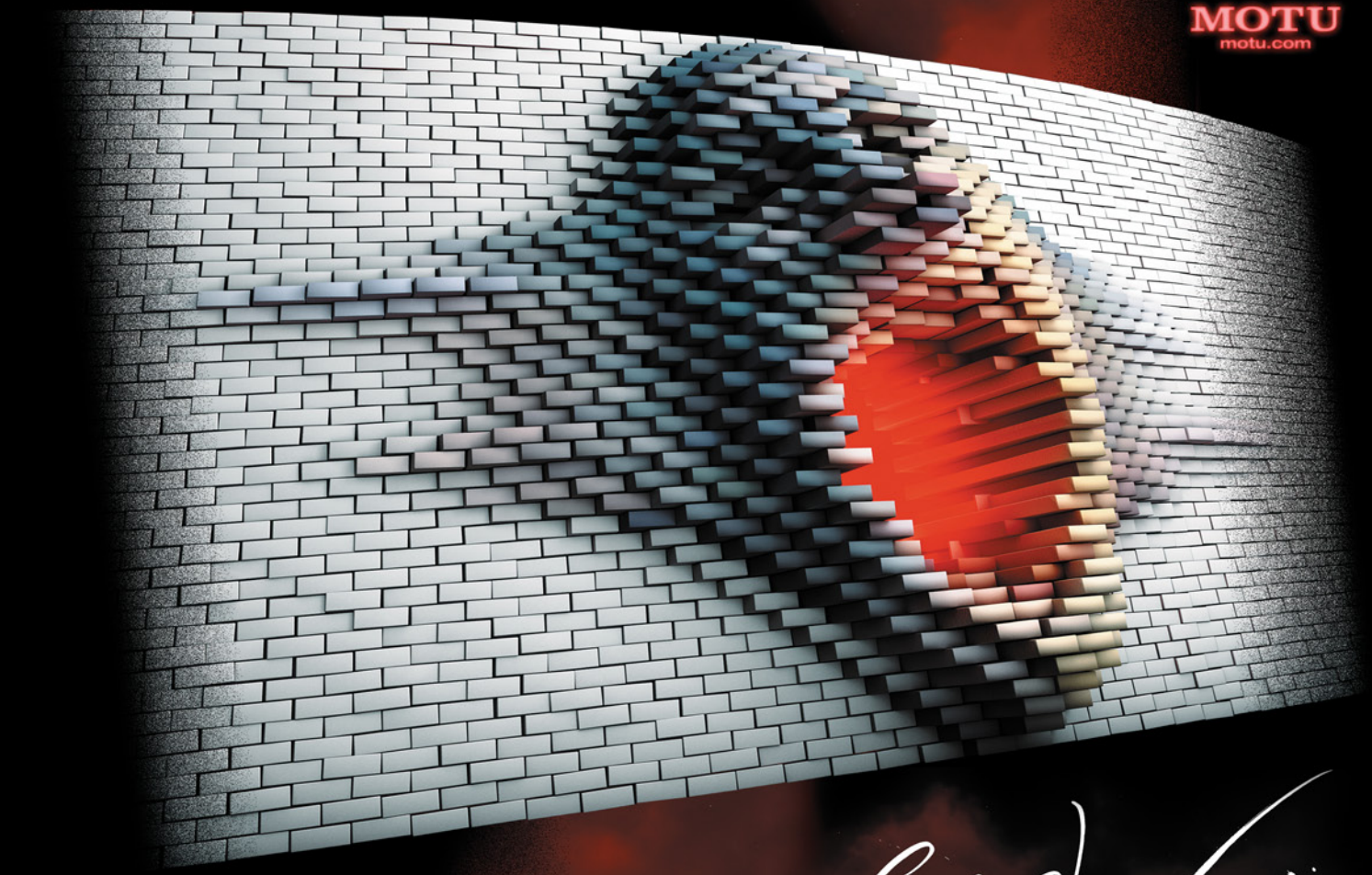

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